

The dynamics of Learner Engagement: A Critical Investigation of a Visual Arts  
Initiative at a Pupil Referral Unit in the North-West of England

A thesis submitted to Edge Hill University for the degree of PhD in the Faculty of  
Arts and Social Sciences

July, 2017

Claire Ann Kinsella  
Department of Psychology

## I. Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work carried out under the normal terms of supervision. I confirm that this work has not been submitted for any comparable academic award.

Signed: *Claire Kinsella*

## II. Acknowledgements

I wish to express a very special thank you to my Director of Studies, Professor Dave Putwain who has guided me through this entire PhD process with true kindness and dedicated professionalism.

I would also like to offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to co-supervisors Dr. Linda Kaye and Dr. Debbie Pope who have always very generously offered their time, guidance and support over the course of my studies.

This PhD thesis would not have been possible without the help from all my participants. I am sincerely grateful for their willingness to take part in this project and share their stories with me.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family, parents, Susan and Gerry, sisters, Elaine and Gillian, and brothers, Paul and Alan.

Thank you also to friends Hilda Bailey, Orla Shortall, Özge Özdüzen, Yael Smith, Kim Duffy, Sarah Cantwell, Emer Wall, Hazel McAllister and Zoe Christoforou.

Finally, I would like to thank Rob Hamer for his loving support.

### III. Abstract

This PhD thesis examines a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics surrounding the concept of learner engagement. It does so by critically investigating a visual arts initiative delivered to a small group of Key Stage 3 students at a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) in the North-West of England. Participating students took part in an artist-led workshop which aimed to enrich the school's pre-existing curriculum by expanding the range creative art activities available to students and by thematically integrating these activities with topics previously covered in other subject lessons. In order to permit a more in-depth investigation of the educational experiences of these participants, a single-case study design was employed whereby multiple sources of evidence were analysed in accordance with two key theoretical perspectives in the psychology of educational engagement. Self-determination theory was drawn upon in order to consider individual-level units of analysis and cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) was employed in order to consider the wider contextual factors that might influence the overall efficacy of the programme. Using a mixture of methods (i.e., questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations) allied to each perspective, staff and students' perceptions of their school environment were examined in order to identify how they had developed their own experientially-based understanding of what constitutes learner engagement within their particular educational environment. From here the analysis moves on to critically comparing the everyday classroom experiences of the students as they participated in the art initiative with that of students participating in subject lessons. By evaluating an educational initiative of this nature with respect to two prominent theoretical perspectives on student engagement, a more in-depth understanding is developed on the psychological processes underpinning learners' engagement amidst the everyday complexities that surround alternative educational environments. The results have implications for how teachers in this context reflect upon their practice.

**Key Words:** learner engagement; self-determination theory; cultural historical activity theory; art education, Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

## IV. Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Declaration .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Index of tables.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Index of figures .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Glossary .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Publications from Thesis.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>Chapter 1:</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Introduction to the Research .....	1
1.2	Background to the Research .....	2
1.2.2	School Exclusions and the Impetus for Alternative Approaches to Educational Engagement .....	3
1.2.3	Towards a more Inclusive Learning environment .....	4
1.2.4	Debates in providing an educational alternative.....	7
1.3	Research Aims and Objectives.....	13
1.3.1	Practical Aims.....	13
1.3.2	Theoretical Aims .....	14
1.4	Overview of the Thesis .....	15
1.5	Chapter Summary.....	17
<b>Chapter 2:</b>	<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>19</b>
2.1	Introduction to the Literature Review.....	19
2.2	Learner engagement: A review of approaches in the psychology of Education and art education fields.....	19
2.2.1	Introduction .....	20
2.2.2	Background context to the literature review .....	21
2.2.3	Methods and Procedures .....	24
2.2.4	A preliminary content analysis of the art education and psychology of education literature .....	27
2.2.5	The sampled literature: a meta-narrative analysis .....	38
2.2.6	Conclusion.....	44

2.3 The Psychology of Student Engagement: A Preliminary Overview of Key Theoretical Perspectives .....	46
2.3.1 The Participation-Identification Model.....	47
2.3.2 Self-Determination Theory .....	51
2.3.3 Phenomenological Approaches .....	55
2.3.4 Cultural Historical Activity Theory .....	59
2.3.5 Composite Models of Engagement .....	63
2.4 Chapter Summary.....	68
<b>Chapter 3: Methodology .....</b>	<b>73</b>
3.1 Introduction to the Methodology .....	73
3.2 Integrating CHAT and SDT Perspectives on Learner Engagement: Epistemological Considerations for a Unifying Case Study Framework.....	74
3.2.1 The Dialectical Logic and the “Socio-Spatial Dimension” of Engagement .....	74
3.2.2 Integrating CHAT and SDT – Challenges and Opportunities .....	76
3.2.3 Modes of Integration: Triangulation .....	78
3.3 Research Design: A Multi-Methods Study .....	81
3.3.1 Contextual Level of Inquiry .....	85
3.3.2 Intra- and Inter-personal Analysis.....	88
3.4 Field Procedures .....	90
3.4.1 Recruitment of Participants .....	90
3.4.2. Preliminary Fieldwork .....	92
3.4.3 Implementation of Initiative .....	96
3.4.4 Ethical Considerations.....	97
3.5 Chapter Summary.....	100
<b>Chapter 4: Supporting Students at the Ashwick: An SDT and CHAT Analysis of Staff Perspectives.....</b>	<b>101</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	101
4.2 Methods.....	102
4.2.1 Field Notes .....	102
4.2.2 Interviews .....	103
4.2.3 Data Analysis .....	104
4.3 Findings.....	104
4.3.1 Life at the “Ashwick Centre” .....	104
4.3.2 Supporting Student Needs at the Ashwick: Practitioner Perspectives .....	108
4.3.3 Teaching at the Ashwick – An Activity Systems Analysis .....	121
4.4 Conclusion .....	126

4.5 Chapter Summary .....	128
<b>Chapter 5: Student Perspectives on their Educational Environments An SDT approach to the Intrapersonal Dynamics Underlying Engagement in Learning .....</b>	<b>129</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	130
5.2 Aims of the Present Study .....	131
5.3 Methods .....	132
5.3.1 Questionnaire Development and Procedure .....	132
5.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews .....	134
5.4 Findings .....	135
5.4.1 Profiles of the Participating Ashwick Students .....	135
5.4.2 Student Perceptions of Mainstream School and the Ashwick Centre Compared .....	138
5.4.3 Basic Needs Satisfaction and Support: PRU Student Participants .....	141
5.4.4 Experiential Orientations: Perceptions on the Role of Classroom Activities .....	148
5.5 Discussion .....	152
5.6 Conclusion .....	155
5.7 Chapter Summary .....	156
<b>Chapter 6: Self-Determined Behaviours in the Classroom: A Comparative Analysis .....</b>	<b>157</b>
6.1 Introduction: Rationale for Observing Classroom Behaviour and Verbal Data from an SDT Perspective .....	157
6.2 Methodology .....	159
6.2.1 Pilot Study .....	159
6.2.2 The SDT Behavioural Observation Schedule .....	160
6.2.3 The Development of a Coding Schedule for the Verbal Data .....	164
6.3 Findings .....	168
6.3.1 An Introduction to the Observed Lessons .....	168
6.3.2 Teacher Support Behavioural Analysis .....	172
6.3.3 Needs Supportive Teacher Behaviours: Key Findings .....	179
6.3.4 Student Needs Satisfaction: Self-Determined Behaviours in the Classroom .....	180
6.3.5 Self-Determined Student Behaviours: Key Findings .....	188
6.4 Discussion .....	189
6.5 Conclusion .....	196
6.6 Chapter Summary .....	198

<b>Chapter 7: Student Agency in the Classroom: A Comparative Analysis</b>	<b>199</b>
7.1 Introduction: Rationale for an investigation of Student Agency	199
7.2 Research Aims and Questions	203
7.3 Methodology	203
7.4 Findings	206
7.4.1 Comparing Patterns in Student Agency Across Three Lessons	206
7.4.2 Critical Incident Analysis	207
7.5 Discussion	220
7.6 Conclusion	223
7.7 Chapter Summary	224
<b>Chapter 8: Conclusion</b>	<b>225</b>
8.1 Summary of Results	225
8.2 Meta-thematic Analysis	228
8.3 Limitations and Implications for Future Research	233
8.4 Contributions	235
<b>References</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>268</b>



## V. Index of Tables

<b>Table 2.1 Number of Published Articles Retrieved on Student Engagement from 1990 to 2013 in the Fields of Psychology of Education and Art Education.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Table 2.2 The Sampled Literature.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Table 3.1 Key Propositions on Learner Engagement in SDT and CHAT .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Table 3.2 Units of Analysis .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Table 4.1 Profiles of Practitioner Interviewees .....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Table 5.1 Profiles of Student Participants .....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>Table 5.2 Summary Psychological Needs and Action Orientations for Participating Ashwick Students .....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Table 6.1 Summary of Operationalised SDT Behavioural Codes .....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Table 6.2 Overview of Operationalisation of SDT Constructs for Coding .....</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Table 6.3 Frequency of Observed Indicators of Proximity Across Lessons .....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Table 6.4 Frequency of Observed Non-Verbal Gestures Across Lessons .....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Table 6.5 Frequency of Different Forms of Praise Across Lessons....</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>Table 6.6 Autonomy Support Behavioural Indicators –Average Per Pupil.....</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>Table 6.7 Frequency of Observed Co-Operation Amongst Students</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Table 6.8 Frequency of Observed Non-Verbal Gestures Amongst Students .....</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Table 6.9 Frequency of Observed Autonomous Learning Behaviours .....</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Table 6.10 Frequency of Different Question Forms Amongst Students .....</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>Table 6.11 Summary of Needs Support and Needs Fulfilment Scores (Averages per Student) .....</b>	<b>190</b>

<b>Table 7.1 Coding Scheme for Classroom Verbal Interaction: Adapted from Rainio (2007) .....</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Table 7.2 Patterns of Student Agency Across Subject Lessons .....</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Table 9.1 Standardized Factor Loadings Based on Responses to 36 Basic Needs Items .....</b>	<b>288</b>

## VI. Index of Figures

<b>Figure 3.1 The Research Design .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Figure 3.2 Activity Systems Analysis .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Figure 3.3 Adapted Flashcard Activity for SDT Questionnaire Items ..</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Figure 3.4 Photographic exploration of aquarium and associated arts-based activities.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Figure 5.1 Basic Needs Questionnaire – PRU participant scores .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Figure 6.1 Sample Extract from Observational Rating Sheet.....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Figure 6.2 Mask-Making in the Art Lesson .....</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Figure 6.3 Model Rocket Construction and Launching Activity in the Engineering Lesson .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Figure 6.4 Classroom Organisation: Seating Arrangement and Participants’ Activity Focus .....</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Figure 6.4 Distribution of Talk Between Lesson Participants .....</b>	<b>183</b>
<b>Figure 7.1 Agentic Action: Content Analysis of Student Contributions .....</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>Figure 8.1 Summary of Main Findings Presented in Chapters 4-7 ...</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>Figure 8.2 Questions for Reflecting on Teaching Practice .....</b>	<b>239</b>

## VII. Glossary

A*	The highest grade awarded for GCSE examinations. The pass grades, from highest to lowest, are: A* (pronounced "A-star"), A, B, C, D, E, F and G.
APP	Assessing Pupils' Progress was an initiative launched in 2008 by the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to support the accuracy of teachers' assessments of their pupils' and to inform lesson planning. It offers schools in England and Wales a set of criteria, guidance and exemplars for making judgements about pupils' progress in relation to National Curriculum levels.
Dual registration	In certain cases, a pupil can be registered at multiple educational establishments, with one main base, and one or more subsidiary bases. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are registered at a mainstream school but are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis.
GCSE	The General Certificate of Secondary Education: A system of public examinations taken by students England and Wales in various subjects from the age of about 16.
Index of Multiple Deprivation	The official governmental measure of relative deprivation for neighbourhoods in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Seven domains of deprivation are included in the index which includes income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment. Each country uses their own distinct version of the index.
Key Stage 3	The legal term for the three years of schooling in England and Wales schools normally known as Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9, when pupils are aged between 11 and 14. It is commonly abbreviated as KS3.
Key Stage 4	The legal term for the two years of school education which incorporate GCSEs, and other exams, in maintained schools in England and Wales,

normally known as Year 10 and Year 11, when pupils are aged between 14 and 16. It is commonly abbreviated as KS4.

Learning Support Units	A term used to cover a range of in-school provision whereby separate short-term teaching and support programmes are delivered to pupils experiencing difficulties in school and/or at risk of being excluded from school.
Nurture Groups	Nurture groups are an in-school, teacher-led, psychosocial intervention consisting of groups of less than 12 students. They seek to effectively replace missing or distorted early nurturing experiences for both children and young adults by immersing students in an accepting and warm environment.
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education is the government body responsible for inspecting and regulating services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for children and young people in England and Wales.
PRUs	Pupil Referral Units are out-of-school units which cater for a wide range of students across England and Wales, including those who have been permanently excluded from school, those who are at risk of permanent exclusion as well as those who refuse to attend school, are pregnant or are without a school place.
SEN	Special Educational Needs: a term used to describe the needs of a child who has a difficulty or disability which makes learning harder for them than for other children their age.

## VIII. Publications from Thesis

- Kinsella, C., Putwain, D., & Kaye, L. K. (2016). A multi-disciplinary perspective towards understanding learner engagement: Approaches in the Psychology of Education and Art Education. *Review of Education*. 4(3), 266-289.
- Kinsella, C., Kaye, L. & Putwain, D. (2015). Can arts-based education help re-engage excluded learners? A case study of an arts-based programme aimed at enhancing educational engagement in Brewer, G & R. Hogarth (Eds.), *Creative Education, Teaching and Learning*. (pp. 290-306). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction to the research**

The importance of engaging all students in their education continues to resonate strongly with families, students, educators, researchers and policy-makers alike, as it is frequently observed that many students go through much of their school life feeling bored, unmotivated and uninvolved in school life (Appleton, Christenson, Kim & Reschly, 2006). Indeed, regardless of the particular aims or ideals that underpin any educational enterprise, if students are passive, frustrated, withdraw from learning opportunities or are unwilling to persist in the face of challenges; then whatever educators try to accomplish in the classroom will become increasingly difficult. Perhaps this is why the notion of “engagement” is regarded as a something of a “buzzword” in education, increasingly being researched, theorised and debated with growing evidence of its critical role in achievement and learning (Kahu, 2013).

This thesis investigates the concept of learner engagement by critically evaluating a visual arts initiative within the context of a PRU in the North-west of England. Consequently, it lies somewhere between an approach to research which is purely exploratory and that which is more transferable to education practice. Because a researcher’s subjectivity frequently affects the kinds of questions they ask, the types of theories they are drawn to, and way they relate to their research participants, it is important to acknowledge the particular social, cultural and disciplinary influences that have led to the current research endeavour. While undertaking postgraduate studies in the psychology of education before registering as a PhD student at Edge Hill University, the researcher encountered a substantial literature on the challenges facing students whom had been excluded from mainstream schools in the UK . From these encounters, it became evident that the values underpinning the calls within this literature for the provision of more inclusive school settings had much in common with the principles and practices emphasized during her initial training and experiences in Community Arts Education, a field which has its roots in social justice and popular and informal education methods (Tate, n.d.). Notwithstanding this perceived area of common interest, it is worth acknowledging that the present research sits at a sometimes uncomfortable boundary between the disciplines of education and psychology. For example, Smith (2005) finds that while much educational research either does not draw upon psychology, explicitly rejects it,

or seeks a different kind of psychology to the one that is currently dominant; much psychological research with educational relevance, is in fact, pursued without any explicit reference to the latter academic field. Part of the reason for the lack of interchange between these disciplines stems from a perceived divergence between an excessive focus on the individual level of analysis in psychology at the expense of a deeper consideration of educational issues in more social and institutional terms. In operating at an analytical boundary between a focus on the social and the individual, then, this PhD is motivated to pursue a conceptual framework which connects a range of different and interrelated levels of analysis.

Therefore, rather than beginning by outlining an individual arts initiative which is presumed to be isolated from ongoing events and the institutional framework of the PRU, this introductory chapter will begin by considering the broader chain of social and political developments which have made it possible to implement and evaluate a research project of this nature within this particular educational context. Therefore, Section 1.2 traces the manner in which the concept of engagement can be tied back into broader political projects and debates about educational practice in the UK. Following this, the practical and theoretical objectives of the research are elaborated in Section 1.3 and a brief overview of the content within the remaining thesis chapters is presented in Section 1.4.

## **1.2 Background to the research: educational engagement in the UK context**

Engagement is a popular concept that enjoys widespread usage in education policy discourses in a post-industrial world where national governments are increasingly striving to restructure their education systems in order to provide the national workforce with skills to compete in an increasingly global labour market. However, while many practitioners, researchers and policy-makers agree that engagement is important, there is debate over the exact meaning and nature of the construct with many considering it multifaceted if not altogether resistant to becoming contained in any way. In fact, the notion of engagement is deployed in a variety of different ways by professionals working within different contexts. For example, for researchers in the U.S.A., the construct of engagement has its roots in preventing students from dropping out of school and has evolved more recently into considerations about the role engagement plays in student outcomes across various academic, social, behavioural and emotional domains (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). In the particular context of the UK, the concept of engagement is much less likely to be deployed



when focusing on pedagogical strategies to boost the attainment of the majority, instead, it tends to be employed in considerations about how to more actively provide for the educational inclusion of students who are at risk of becoming disconnected from learning and as a consequence, leaving school without the same levels of training and employment prospects as their classroom colleagues. Thus, within this context, we see research on educational engagement arise out of concerns such as low student uptake of science subjects (Hampden-Thompson & Bennett, 2013), the impact of negative stereotypes and discrimination on young Muslim students (Shah, 2009) and the role of children's social comparison in physical education (Barnes & Spray, 2013). More common, however, are considerations of educational engagement with respect to various groups of young people who do not appear to have a stable learning relationship with an educational institution of any kind whether this be developed at school, through distance-learning or accessed via vocational training (see Brader & McGinty, 2005; Putwain, Nicholson & Edwards, 2016; White & Laczik, 2016; Duffy & Elwood, 2013; Cremin, Mason & Busher, 2011). As the present research can be located within this latter domain, the next section will turn to examining the social and political circumstances which have triggered this scholarly interest.

### **1.2.2 School exclusions and the impetus for alternative approaches to educational engagement**

Since the 1990s, public concerns have been rising over levels of violent and disruptive behaviour displayed by children in schools across Britain (Blyth & Milner, 2003). Under the provisions of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, young people presenting with such behaviour may be excluded from school on a fixed, indefinite or even permanent basis (DfES, 1992). Of course, the personal costs incurred by the individual receiving a permanent exclusion is often profound since there is a considerable stigma attached to permanent exclusion and the long-term outcomes for those excluded are often poor. In fact, exclusion from school has been linked to a host of negative long-term outcomes which are known to impact upon quality of life: low academic attainment, reduced employment opportunities, homelessness, isolation, inaccessibility to social resources and mental ill health (Hayton, 1999; Sellman, Bedward, Cole & Daniels, 2002; Attwood, Croll & Hamilton, 2004; Hilton, 2006; Eastman, 2011).

Of course, whilst exclusion from school inevitably represents a major disruption to a child's learning and development, the political rationale for reducing exclusions from school more

frequently stems from the wider economic implications associated with a substantial proportion of young people failing to develop the skills thought to be of increasing importance to the national economy (Attwood, Croll & Hamilton, 2003). Indeed, government documentation has argued that the long-term decline in the numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs means that young people who fail to acquire skills relevant to the “knowledge economy” face ever-dwindling prospects for employment (DfES, 2002, p.5). In addition, concerns about rates of permanent exclusion from school have escalated with the emergence of findings that many excludees go on to be prosecuted for criminal acts (Cullingford, 1999) and that a high proportion of the UK prison population have received an exclusion from school (Vulliamy & Webb, 2001). Thus, from an instrumental perspective, the pervasiveness of permanent exclusions across the UK is often considered to place huge demands on the economic system as a result of losses in productivity and the cost of out-of-work benefits as well as the increased expenditure on services such as the National Health Service and the criminal justice system. For example, in a 2007 report, New Philanthropy Capital estimated the aggregate of the total lifetime cost of permanent exclusions across the UK at £650 million and estimated that more than three quarters of this figure would fall to society (Brookes, Goodall, & Heady, 2007).

### **1.2.3 Towards a more inclusive learning environment**

During the 1990s, heightened media interest and public concern surrounding the steady increase in exclusion rates prompted the Labour Government to attempt to initiate a National Strategies programme to “put inclusion at the heart of planning and provision”<sup>1</sup>. Under this programme, schools have been encouraged to reduce permanent exclusions by adopting alternative strategies such as providing “Learning Support Units”, organising school moves and putting dual registration and part-time timetables in place for those pupils most at risk of being excluded (Eastman, 2011). In addition, the political drive to decrease the rate of exclusions has resulted in a number of policy initiatives aimed at supporting groups that have been identified as being particularly vulnerable. This is because official figures continue to reveal a disproportionate level of school exclusion. In fact, statistics show that boys of lower socio-economic status, boys from Afro Caribbean backgrounds, children with special educational needs and children in public care are all more likely to experience being excluded

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Strategies Inclusion website cited in Massey, A., & Groves, J. (2011). *Best Behaviour: School discipline, intervention and exclusion*. (p38). London: Policy Exchange.

from school (DfES, 2007). As a result, the reforms set out in the Government's Green Paper "Every Child Matters" (DfES, 2003) outline the expectation of improved outcomes for vulnerable children through mechanisms such as the development of more effective inter-agency work, more preventative work and the integration of children's support services. In addition to this, policy documents such as the "Special Educational Needs Code of Practice" (DfES, 2001), "Removing Barriers to Achievement" (DfES, 2004) and the "14-19 White Paper, Education and Skills" (DfES, 2005), all emphasize the need for schools and Local Authorities to develop more inclusive learning environments (Harris, Vincent, Thomson & Toalster, 2006).

When one attends more closely to the various educational policies that advocate for increased educational inclusion, it becomes evident that precisely what constitutes a more inclusive learning environment and exactly how this will be achieved has become a matter of considerable debate. For example, the "Building Engagement, Building Futures" strategy document (DBIS, 2011) makes explicit links between disengagement and educational participation, arguing that students, who do not attain, were less likely to participate in education and training, thus leading to longer-term disadvantage. Thus, strategic intervention during early and teenage years is considered vital. Consequently, key areas of focus considered essential to improving engagement are outlined including the raising of the participation age, providing apprenticeships, coherent vocational education within 16–19 provision, and financial resources to support young people to gain work experience. Whilst this framework emphasises functional life skills and vocational routes as a means to tackle disengagement; such an approach has drawn strong criticism. This is because it is argued that the increased emphasis on vocational skills fails to grapple with the dilemma of how to avoid "a mental/manual" division whereby educational pathways become a "two- or three-track system that reproduce social, economic and educational disadvantage" (Thomson & Russell, 2009, p.2).

Other government policies have presented educational providers with a confusing array of difficult, and sometimes conflicting, choices. For example, whilst the government's white paper entitled "Back on Track" acknowledges that the full National Curriculum:

may not be the most appropriate route to maximize some pupils' learning and achievement, particularly those who have been disengaged by their experience of the National Curriculum at school and/or have specific learning or behavioural

issues which need to be addressed before they can access the wider curriculum' (DfCSF, 2008, p.26).

The expectation, nevertheless, is made abundantly clear that the mainstream subjects of English, mathematics, science, ICT, plus PE and citizenship should be offered by alternative providers. More recently, Taylor (2012), has echoed these sentiments in a government-commissioned report where he claims that although meeting the social and emotional needs of pupils at school is essential, at times this comes "at the expense of academic rigour". As a result, Taylor argues that "for children with acute needs, behind on their schooling, the focus on key skills should never slip. Literacy and numeracy become more important not less" (2012, p.6).

Thus, over the past decade, it is possible to trace a certain amount of ambiguity with respect to alternative approaches to education in the various government reports which have been published. Indeed, as we have seen from the policy details above, guidance in reports range widely; from those emphasizing more personalized and flexible curriculum options, to those suggesting the value of a more vocational approach and finally there are those which stress the importance of a return to a more conventional, academic focus. There can be no doubt, then, that the messages sent by central government are often mixed and confusing. Indeed, the difficulties involved in attempting to navigate this complex policy terrain raises more fundamental questions about the wider purpose of education (Parsons, 2005). Indeed, as we have seen above, one major assumption underpinning the policy emphasis on increased participation in education is the belief that this will guarantee future employment for the individual pupil as well as serving as the key to sustained economic growth. Within this discourse, the scope of education becomes less about a humanistic commitment to learning as a form of empowerment and personal development. Instead, education is more narrowly conceived as way of increasing one's personal flexibility in order to secure employment within the ever-shifting demands of the market economy.

Whilst government education policies view employment as the outcome par excellence of education, schools and alternative providers are nevertheless faced with a bewildering array of options, ambiguities and tensions to navigate their way through if they are to meet policy demands (Brader & McGinty, 2005). Often, however, they are forced to do this with a lack of empirical research findings to guide them because policy in this field moves at a much more rapid pace than scientific convention would ever allow. As a result, concepts such as

educational engagement remain rather impressionistic and altogether lacking in the robust qualities and comparative capacities of carefully operationalised empirical constructs. Thus, there is a necessity to address this mismatch between policy solutions and research approaches in order to more adequately address the relevance, implementation and effectiveness of current and proposed solutions to student disengagement.

#### **1.2.4 Debates in providing an educational alternative**

Amidst a climate of increased pressure to reduce exclusion rates as well as reaching attainment and attendance targets, while providing work-focused enterprise-based schemes, many schools have continued to seek alternative solutions to the challenging behaviour and social and emotional needs of some of their most vulnerable pupils (Eastman, 2011). A major theme arising in these discussions is the appropriateness of the curriculum, especially the academically-orientated General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) curriculum for students at Key Stage 4 (KS4). Indeed, during the 1990s, much mainstream educational research suggested that disaffected pupils perceive school, and in particular, the overtly academic National Curriculum, as unstimulating and irrelevant to their needs. For example, O’Keefe’s (1994) mass survey of truancy suggested that a primary cause of this phenomenon was the fact that pupils were reluctant to attend classes in subjects which they disliked and considered boring, or that they experienced as stressful or difficult. Pupils participating in O’Keefe’s research suggested that the curriculum needed more interest, more practical activities and more choice. In addition, Kinder, Harland, Wilkin & Wakefield’s (1995) study revealed that a wide variety of practitioners including teachers, education welfare officers, special needs workers, police liaison officers and out-reach educationalists blamed the academic demands made by the National Curriculum for disaffection amongst young pupils. More specifically, they pointed to the effects of new methods of assessment, the lack of time for pastoral care and the limited choice in school subjects as features of the curriculum which they considered to be particularly disadvantaging for some groups of pupils.

Indeed, as Charlton, Panting and Willis (2004) point out, it is only recently that schools have been able to become more imaginative in their attempts to improve provisions for pupils’ in order to reduce exclusion risks. This is because the government has responded to concerns over the relevance of the National Curriculum by encouraging schools to offer more choices

at Key Stage 4 and by empowering them to devise alternative curriculum options that are better tailored to meet individual needs (For further details see Hallam et al, 2007). In fact, Cullen, Fletcher-Campbell, Bowen, Osgood & Kelleher (2000) have identified three main types of provision which have emerged from this more recent government relaxation of curriculum demands: “satellite programmes”, where separate provision is made for a group of identified pupils with little relationship to the mainstream curriculum; “extension programmes”, where individualized approaches are adopted to compensate for perceived weaknesses in the breadth of content or style of delivery of the National Curriculum and “complementary programmes” which provide an opportunity for pupils to follow externally provided vocationally orientated options that cannot be offered as part of the mainstream school curriculum. Initiatives of the latter kind have involved a variety of work-related programmes including Manchester’s Mpower programme, the Connexions Service, as well as the Education Action Zones, Excellence in Cities and Sure Start initiatives (Cullen, Fletcher-Campbell, Bowen, Osgood, & Kelleher, 2000).

Despite the proliferation of initiatives designed to enhance educational engagement, Thomson and Russell (2009) have found that the field of alternative education is currently characterized by a lack of coordinated data about which programmes exist as well as a proliferation of programmes with varying funding sources, costs and entry practices. The authors suggest that this data deficit has partly arisen as a result of the devolved nature of schools and programmes. Of course, this situation bodes very poorly for the monitoring of programme effectiveness, thus the authors have suggested that evidence about quality assurance be harmonized across all alternative programmes so that the outcomes of different interventions can be documented for the future development of professional practice.

A number of these more vocationally-orientated programmes have received positive reviews by educational researchers. However, the research here also reveals that the success of such programmes is contingent upon a whole series of factors which reside considerably beyond the realms of a curriculum content overhaul. For example, in their evaluation of the Skill Force initiative, Hallam and colleagues (2007) found that whilst pupils considered the practical curriculum content as more meaningful and the opportunity to gain qualifications as more useful for future employment; many of the students also noted that in contrast to their interactions with teachers in mainstream schools, pupils were able to develop more

positive relationships with Skill Force staff and this, in turn, facilitated them in obtaining guidance and pastoral support when needed. Similarly, when Charlton, Panting and Willis, (2004) conducted an evaluation of the Alternative Curriculum 2001 (AC2001) initiative, pupils interviewed stated that as well as appreciating the more practical and career-orientated elements associated with AC2001, they also valued the more relaxed ethos of the programme, the helpful feedback they received from teachers, the presence of adults who listened to their concerns and the enhanced opportunities to exercise control over their lives.

Whilst policy-makers and educational practitioners are beginning to act on the perceived irrelevance of the National Curriculum for certain groups of pupils, there are a number of critics who are considerably more sceptical of the assumption that if the curriculum can be made more relevant to the job market, then disaffection amongst pupils will be more unlikely. For example, in their 2001 study of 92 13-16-year-olds attending PRUs in the UK, Solomon and Rogers (2001) found that the pupils they surveyed and interviewed did not generally show an interest in a vocational rather than an academic curriculum. In fact, in many cases, pupils saw the mainstream school curriculum as relevant to jobs and saw the value of conventional academic qualifications. Nevertheless, further education was presented and experienced as a means to an end rather than as an experience with intrinsic educational value. However, many of the educational practitioners interviewed commented that before attending to more career-orientated goals with pupils, there is often a more pressing need to raise their general self-esteem and levels of motivation. Consequently, Solomon and Rogers draw on the principles of Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory to argue for the development of carefully sequenced programmes which contain a number of more proximal academic goals as opposed to those which emphasise more distal, vocationally-orientated goals.

Beyond this, Thomson and Russell (2009) argue that vocational education strategies may not meet the diverse needs and interests of pupils. Moreover, they point out that although specialist providers offer various qualification schemes and that these qualifications could in theory count as an academic qualification, such qualifications may not be as valued or recognised as those more standardized qualifications obtained in mainstream education, especially when a pupil is seeking to transfer to post-16 education, training or employment. In addition, the different scales of operation in alternative provision –local, regional and national – mean that what different providers offer, how they are funded and how they are

accountable are not the same (Thomson and Russell, 2009). Indeed, Thompson and Russell go on to point out that the devolved and unregulated nature of alternative provision in the two local authority regions they examined has created a relatively large but narrow array of alternative programmes where the dominant trend is towards the fostering of work-related and basic life skills rather than programmes which adopt a more academic, therapeutic or recreational approach to educational engagement.

Nevertheless, there have been some attempts to review the work of alternative providers who adopt these latter approaches. For example, Harris, Vincent, Thomson and Toalster (2006) examined the Coalfields Alternative to Exclusion (CATE) strategy which seeks to remove the stigma and sense of rejection that is often associated with permanent exclusion by negotiating moves to new schools and additional support for pupils who are at risk of exclusion. In their analysis of interview data with young pupils and educational practitioners, Harris and colleagues draw on Bowlby's (1988) attachment theory to argue that the CATE strategy could be seen as a successful preventative strategy because it offered pupils the opportunity to develop new emotional attachments, to revise and experiment with new behaviours/identities and to experience reparative relationships with teaching staff. In fact, the significance of the development of positive relations between staff and pupils is a key theme which arises across numerous programme reviews in the field of alternative education. For example, in their review of the Sparks and St. Johns programmes, Frankham and colleagues (2007) highlighted the importance of staff using a non-confrontational and respectful approach with pupils as well as maintaining frequent contact with parents. Similarly, in their review of inter-agency initiatives developed in three councils in Scotland, Lloyd, Stead and Kendrick (2003) argued that the key to appropriate support for young people was the adoption of a non-judgemental, human style by staff so that pupils were carefully listened to and valued as individuals rather than in terms of disorders requiring a particular, prescribed response (for similar findings see Munn & Lloyd, 2005).

In terms of documenting the specific role of the arts in enhancing educational engagement of students who have been excluded or are at risk of being excluded, a small number of reports on arts projects in various mainstream and alternative educational settings have emerged in recent years. For example, Wilkin, Gulliver and Kinder (2005) conducted 69 interviews with pupils, teachers, artists and other stakeholders from seven arts projects which were based at three individual PRUs and four different Learning Support Units across



the UK. Most pupils interviewed reported that projects had given them a sense of satisfaction and achievement as well as increasing their knowledge skills and techniques in certain art forms. In addition, approximately half of the pupils felt that participating in the arts had improved their communication and listening skills. Teachers interviewed also noticed an improvement in their pupils' ability to interact within groups and reported that increased self-esteem and confidence was often evident as a consequence of achievement and participation in projects. Nevertheless, Wilkin and colleagues also found that pupils did not generally consider that their involvement in the arts projects had directly impacted upon their commitment to education nor did they think that it was likely that the positive impact the projects had on their behaviour would be sustained within the day-to-day school environment. Similar findings are reported by Holloway and Chambers (2016) in their review of "Graft & Glamour", a pilot project that ran over two years and involved 57 young people who had been excluded from secondary education (one group from in an industrial town in the north of England and another in inner-city London) in film making projects in collaboration with several prominent media companies and creative agencies. According to Holloway and Chambers, while the project achieved its objectives with respect to students successfully completing the creative programme and returning to school, further education or training; it was noted that a number of younger students reported that their motivation in education began to decrease on their return to mainstream school.

The UK government's Creative Partnerships programme also ignited a considerable amount of research interest. This learning programme, which ran across England between 2002 and 2011, sought to develop young people's creativity through collaborations between artists' and schools. In their exploration of the comparative impact of Creative Partnerships on the attainment and behaviour (attendance and exclusions) of participating students, Durbin, Rutt, Saltini, Sharp, Teeman and White (2010), examined the way in which absence and exclusion rates changed over time in Creative Partnership schools when compared with schools who were not involved in Creative Partnerships. It was found that while participation in Creative Partnerships was associated with a reduction in total absence rates in primary schools, there were no statistically significant effects on attendance in secondary schools. In addition, it was found that involvement in Creative Partnerships did not affect exclusion rates in either primary or secondary schools, but the authors explain that this may have been due to the fact that exclusions are relatively rare, thus making it more difficult to show an impact on their measures.

Similarly, McLellan, Galton, Steward and Pages' (2012) investigation of the Creative Partnership programme compared self-reported levels of student well-being in ten participating and ten non-participating schools. While no overall difference was found between the schools, the authors argue that it would be unreasonable to conclude that the Creative Partnerships work was not having a specific positive impact on student well-being. They point out that the schools recruited as a base-line comparators were less than ideal since they also implemented a range of initiatives and activities in an effort to enhance student well-being. Indeed, the authors found that in instances where Creative Partnerships activities were observed, there was substantial evidence of students enjoying and engaging in what they were doing. For example, it was noted that teachers frequently commented about how creative activities re-engaged those students who found a more structured classroom challenging while students often said that working with creative practitioners was fun because the activities delivered were enjoyable, they were able to make decisions for themselves and they had developed good relations with the project artists. Moreover, it is argued that since effective controls cannot be put in place to ensure that situated research programmes establish a reliable basis for comparison (i.e., conducting a controlled, experimental analysis so that a school with a creative arts programme is compared to a school with no activities in place to promote student wellbeing would pose various ethical dilemmas as well as practical issues), it is necessary to move away from the problematic question of overall impact of programmes to consider the nuances of interpersonal processes.

McLellan, Galton, Steward and Page (2012) have posed challenging questions for how arts-based educational interventions are evaluated because the implicit assumption is often made that participation in the arts might have the capacity to engender a more positive perception of schooling and impact upon young people's behaviour in the classroom. However, as the evidence on alternative educational programmes considered thus far has demonstrated, most evaluations are purely attitudinal and retrospective, and do not often incorporate evidence arising from more immediate and situated forms of analysis. Rather they tend to rely solely upon the content of key stakeholders' memories of events as well as their current perceptions of schooling. By adopting a case-study research design which incorporates structured classroom observations, this thesis responds to McLellan and colleagues' call for a greater focus upon the complexity of different approaches adopted

within schools when they implement initiatives designed to improve their students' experiences of education. However, before outlining the conceptual underpinnings of this approach in greater detail, it is firstly necessary to outline the aims for the visual arts initiative at the centre of the present research, within the research and policy context which has been outlined thus far.

### **1.3 Research aims and objectives**

The proposed research pursues a series of practical as well as theoretical aims and objectives.

#### **1.3.1 Practical aims**

The key practical aim guiding the proposed research is to create a learning context that enriches the school's pre-existing curriculum by expanding the range creative art activities available to students and by thematically integrating these activities with topics previously covered in other subject lessons. The notion of enrichment is used here to denote activities which are provided in order to extend students' education beyond their main course of study at the PRU. The purpose is to provide opportunities for students' to experience a broader educational experience than they would have otherwise received without participating.

This thesis is not aimed at advocating a model of public support for the arts based on the "art for art's sake" rationale nor is it an attempt to simply prove the social utility of the arts. There are important reasons for side-stepping the dichotomy between intrinsic and instrumental value when conducting a critical evaluation of a visual arts initiative. In terms of claims for the intrinsic value of the arts, while certain art forms may have this kind of value for particular groups and individuals, it would be problematic to assume that this would necessarily be the case for all students, including those participating in the present research programme. Moreover, as Urfalino (2004, 402) points out, as it has become more and more difficult to ascertain indisputable referents for the notions "culture" and "art", the pertinence of the idea that art and culture participate in what favours a better life is uncertain. At the same time, it would also be misguided to reduce the role of art in the PRU to a purely utilitarian function so that the *only* possible reason for the implementation of an art initiative would be to increase the students' educational engagement. The researcher acknowledges the problematic nature of overly instrumental views of cultural pursuits since

this risks setting up an expectation that what is to be justifiably expected from an evaluation of an art initiative is as Nielsen (2003, p.241) puts it: “an ‘objective’ technocratic instrument for making priorities”. Since it is argued that the cultural political consensus on the value of the arts is necessarily pluralistic, socially responsible evaluations of arts-based initiatives must relate to multiple professional standards.

Therefore, this thesis is an evaluation from a psychology of learner engagement perspective. It aims to shape the basis for teaching practice and educational policy decisions on a more qualified level and with greater vision than current practice allows. The general contribution which is envisaged for this research is to contribute to reflecting on and qualifying the overall interpretative frameworks and forms of understanding operative in teaching practice and psychological theory. This involves creating a space for considering the development and conditions of the pre-existing educational sphere as well as analyzing the potentials and limitations of the initiative in relation to the principal perspectives in the psychology of learner engagement. As well as operating within a plurality of contexts for evaluation, if the current assessment of the art initiative is to inform practice, then its aims should position itself within the current, unique status of public policy in the field that surrounds it. Therefore, amid calls from practitioners and students for more choice and practical activities than the current National Curriculum allows for; as well as concerns that this should avoid a mental/manual division whereby vocational pathways become a system that reproduces social, economic and educational disadvantage, an art initiative such as this is well-placed to offer a more balanced alternative. In other words, it is argued that a visual arts initiative of the kind offered here with its emphasis upon creativity, expressive skills as well as art knowledge and technical skills, allows for further learning development amongst participants without assuming a particular vocational path.

### **1.3.2 Theoretical aims**

The primary theoretical aim guiding the proposed research is to develop a richer and more comprehensive psychological understanding of the various interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics underlying engagement in learning. In order to work towards achieving this aim, the following research objectives have been developed:

1. To critically consider what *engagement* means for the purposes of a piece of applied research that exists at the interface between theories derived from the psychology of education and practices that have emerged within the field of art education
2. To draw upon self-determination theory (SDT) in order to investigate intrapersonal and environmental dimensions of engagement processes in participating pupils
3. To draw upon cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) to confirm, expand or challenge the above theoretical framework by conducting a more broad-based analysis of the various sets of contextual factors (e.g., instructional method, pupil-teacher relationships, parental support and subject matter) that could be expected to exert influence upon levels of student engagement.

## **1.4 Overview of the thesis**

The literature review presented in Chapter 2 is organised into three main sections where the focus shifts from an initial inter-disciplinary view to a more in-depth review of the psychological literature before finishing with a more exclusive focus on specific theoretical perspectives. Therefore, because this thesis presents a piece of applied research that exists at the interface between theories derived from the psychology of education and practices that have emerged within the field of art education, the first section (Section 2.1) aims to compare and clarify the diversity of ways in which the concept of engagement is used across each of these disciplines. The second section (Section 2.2) then focuses more exclusively on the psychology of education literature and provides a more in-depth review of the range of approaches to engagement that have arisen in recent years and considers their implications for the forthcoming case study research design. Finally, in order to inform the approach to the data collection and analysis, the third section (Section 2.3) examines the range of conceptual tools that have emerged within two prominent psychological perspectives on educational engagement: self-determination theory (SDT) and cultural and historical activity theory (CHAT).

Chapter 3 follows with an outline of the case study methodology for the thesis. A mixed-method approach was used to gather data for the case study (i.e. data was gathered using questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews) which are initially treated as distinct units of analysis embedded within distinct theoretical approaches). Consequently, the

chapter begins by discussing the rationale for adopting triangulation as a guiding framework for the analysis. It is argued that the value of this particular integrative analytic approach lies in its preservation of the focus and specificity of theoretical perspectives but at the same time in its ability to create a more expansive and multi-faceted picture of engagement. From here, the chapter moves on to outlining the epistemological considerations that come with any attempt to draw upon more than one theoretical perspective in a single case analysis. Finally, the rationale for a case study approach, the key propositions to be examined and the procedures to be followed during the data collection and analysis phases of the research, are outlined.

The research findings are detailed over four chapters. Chapter 4 examines the basic institutional structure and everyday practices that take place at the “Ashwick centre”, the pseudonym used to denote the alternative school at the centre of this thesis. Staff perspectives on the psychological needs of their students are also explored as well as the wider societal and institutional demands that accompany their work in this particular context. In Chapter 5, the socio-demographic and familial circumstances of the participating students are explored before moving on to examine their perceptions and experiences of school. Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 report the results of a series of classroom observations which were conducted in order to permit a closer investigation of the more immediate features of day-to-day lessons and to compare these with the type of activities implemented as part of the art initiative. Chapter 6 presents the results of classroom observations which were conducted from an SDT perspective in order to compare the extent to which pupils’ psychological needs were being supported and satisfied in two different subject lessons (ICT and engineering) with a mask-making workshop which was delivered as part of the present research initiative. Chapter 7 reports the results of a series of analyses of verbal classroom data which were conducted in order to investigate the ways in which student agency were manifested in these same three sessions (i.e. ICT, engineering and the mask-making workshop). Chapter 8 summarises the key findings from chapters 4 to 7, considers the limitations of the present research and outlines the implications of the findings for theory and practice.

## 1.5 Chapter summary

While it would be overly simplistic to suggest a direct relationship between social and political concerns and the preoccupations of academic researchers, over the course of this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate how the concept of engagement for the latter can be tied back into broader political projects, debates and processes. Indeed, it was pointed out that in the UK context, the concept of engagement is much less likely to be deployed when focusing on pedagogical strategies to boost the attainment of the majority, but instead tends to be employed in considerations about how to more actively provide for the educational inclusion of students who are at risk of becoming disconnected from learning. It has been argued that the political rationale for reducing exclusions from school more frequently stems from the wider economic implications associated with a substantial proportion of young people failing to develop the skills thought to be of increasing importance to the national economy. Thus, the increasing political spotlight upon exclusion has provided an impetus for more research on educational engagement as the basic assumption underlying much of the educational inclusion policy and agenda is that a lack of participation in education and training leads to longer-term disadvantage. Indeed, this chapter has pointed to research which has found that official exclusions from school are linked to a host of negative long-term outcomes including low academic attainment, reduced employment opportunities, homelessness, isolation, inaccessibility to social resources and mental ill health.

Nevertheless, since the early 2000s schools have been vested with more powers to devise alternative curriculum options that are better tailored to meet students' needs in the interest of inclusion (Charton, Panting & Willis, 2004). However, when one attends more closely to the various educational policies that advocate for increased educational inclusion, it is not always evident how a more inclusive learning environment can be achieved. Moreover, schools are operating within a climate of multiple, and sometimes competing pressures. So while alternative providers are being encouraged to provide work-focused enterprise-based schemes in order to offer a more "relevant" curriculum, they are also met with the ongoing challenge of maintaining academic standards and addressing what are often the complex social and emotional needs of their pupils (Eastman, 2011). At present, they are forced to do all this with a lack of empirical research findings to guide them and because policy in this field moves at a much more rapid pace than scientific convention would ever allow. The

devolved nature of schools and alternative programmes only serves to compound these problems such that a more co-ordinated approach to educational policies becomes very difficult for schools to implement in practice. While the tendency for governments to adopt a highly instrumental approach to educational policy, whereby the emphasis is upon finding and implementing “what works” might be well-intentioned, it is clear that the success of educational programmes is often contingent upon a whole series of factors which reside considerably beyond the realms of curriculum content overhauls, incentives for work placement participation or the increased monitoring of academic attainment. As a result, it is argued that, with its focus on explicating not only the characteristics that individual students bring to learning situations (e.g., ability beliefs, perceptions, values), but also on the socio-contextual features within their learning environments, much potential exists for psychological research on learner engagement to support teaching practice.



## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction to the literature review**

The literature review presented in this chapter is organised into three main sections. Section 2.2 examines the variety of ways in which the concept of engagement is used in the psychology of education and art education literature. Section 2.3 comprises a more in-depth review of the various psychological perspectives on educational engagement while section 2.4 focuses more specifically on critically comparing two of these perspectives: self-determination theory (SDT) and cultural and historical activity theory (CHAT). This chapter will conclude with an assessment of the implications stemming from this literature for the forthcoming case study research design, implementation and analysis.

### **2.2 Learner Engagement: A review of approaches in the psychology of education and art education fields**

This literature review critically examines the concept of *engagement* as it has emerged within two distinct bodies of literature in the fields of art education and the psychology of education. In order to grapple with the heterogeneous nature of this literature, a meta-narrative review was conducted whereby recurring narratives from various sub-fields including special educational needs, gallery education and human development, were systematically identified and analysed in order to clarify the diversity of ways in which the concept of engagement is used within different research traditions. Areas of overlap between the ways in which the concept is understood and treated within these various texts were examined, as well as a consideration of the potential for any tensions to arise between them. It will be argued that the gap between the manner in which learner engagement is conceived and employed within these disciplines is not as wide as one might presume and that rather than these being incongruous with one another, in many respects, the approaches adopted within each discipline are complementary. It will be suggested that with further disciplinary exchange, especially with respect to the role of educational artefacts and social signals arising during the learning process, wider scope arises for advancing our understanding of learner engagement.

### 2.2.1 Introduction

If psychological research is to make a valuable contribution to the practice of education, and educators are to make use of these contributions, it is essential that the various conceptual devices that are used by each set of professionals are effectively interpreted, translated and in some cases, even transformed (Kelly, 2012). Indeed, as Salomon (1995) argues, there is a growing demand for greater ecological validity and practical relevance within research on the psychology of education so that scope of this field broadens to consider individuals within wider social and cultural context. Feldman (1987) adds that while it is typically considered “natural” for an applied field such as art education to look to “foundational fields” in order to look for insights that may prove useful for practice, less frequently recognised is the stimulation and challenge that applied fields can provide for the more theoretical fields. As Feldman (1987, p. 257) goes on to argue:

it is often the case that the applied field will move ahead (or at least change) well in advance of any theoretical or empirical impetus from a foundational field. Then it falls to the foundational field to try to catch up—in effect, to give sound reasons why things have gone the way they have.

While inter-disciplinary research is frequently lauded for its potential to generate fresh insights and provide more holistic approaches to complex issues (see Nissani, 1997), the tensions that arise between collaborating disciplines are not always productive since major discrepancies can also give rise to retreats from inter-disciplinary interchange. Indeed, such discrepancies have been speculated upon in the case of the psychology of education and art education. Arnheim (1989), for example, points out that the application of insights obtained via the scientific method to art education is likely to be received with distrust by a certain number of educators who maintain that any kind of reasoning about the artistic activity endangers the spontaneity of creative process. Similarly, Feldman (1983) has argued that a preoccupation within developmental psychology (especially the Piagetian variety) to represent intellectual achievements that occur universally has placed it at odds with art education approaches that aspire to foster unique and idiosyncratic elements within creative practice. Despite such schisms, other scholars such as Freeman (2014) and Kozbelt and Seeley (2007) argue that there exist numerous areas of common interest between artists and psychologists since many of the creative processes that the art teacher facilitates can provide unique insights into psychological processes such as attention, object perception and mental representations. As such, Freeman points out that, though rare, there have been some

noteworthy attempts to move towards what he calls a “reconciliation” between these disciplines.

In light of these recent attempts at bridging the gap between art education and the psychology of education, this literature review considers another common area of interest between these disciplines—the case of *learner engagement*. Although this notion is deployed in a variety of different ways by professionals working within each discipline, the potential for a cross-fertilisation of ideas between both has been overlooked. So while in the field of psychology, the notion of engagement has crystallised into a number of relatively discrete schools of thought; in the field of art education, the notion of engagement comprises a more diffuse set of ideas that typically centre around various socio-political ideals. The purpose of this review, therefore, is to provide a critical comparison of some of the most recent and relevant scholarship in art education and the psychology of education. The overriding aim is to consider whether any evidence of overlaps, conflicts or gaps between discourses of learner engagement in each discipline may serve as a useful catalyst for future advances in developing a deeper understanding of this complex educational phenomenon.

## **2.2.2 Background context to the literature review**

### *Modelling learner engagement: recent directions in the psychology of education*

The impetus behind the psychological study of engagement has been driven by a practical motivation among psychologists to understand and enhance student learning and achievement as well as to prevent pupils from prematurely ending their educational career either through voluntarily dropping out or being permanently excluded (Furlong & Christenson, 2008). As a result, we have witnessed the emergence of a number of different perspectives on engagement whereby it is typically conceived as the visible manifestation of various sets of underlying behavioural, affective and cognitive processes. For example, Finn’s (1989) participation–identification model posits that learners sense of belonging at school and valuing of education is maximised when students maintain multiple and expanding forms of behavioural participation in school-relevant activities; while the self-system model of motivational development posits that when pupils’ psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy are met by their educational environments, they will engage

more constructively in their learning (see Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Reeve, Ryan, Deci & Jang, 2007).

Other researchers have sought to examine the more immediate aspects of educational engagement as it emerges during concrete interactions in educational environments (Hidi, Renniger & Krapp, 2004). For example, Shernoff and colleagues (2003) have developed an “experience sampling method” whereby, in response to a signal from an electronic pager at random moments during school time, participants report on their location, activity, affective and cognitive experiences. In addition, there also has been a noteworthy trend towards developing more comprehensive models of engagement by bringing together a wide array of academic, behavioural, cognitive and affective factors. For example, Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) conceptualised engagement as a multidimensional construct that centres around participation in academic, social and extracurricular activities; positive and negative affect arising from interactions with teachers, peers and school; as well as personal investment in school, self-regulation and striving for mastery in learning tasks (see also Martin, 2007). Thus, with the emergence of such complex models, the concept of engagement has been elevated to the level of a meta-construct which bring together many previously separate lines of enquiry (Reschly & Christenson, 2012).

While the latter approaches tend to employ standardised universal descriptors when presenting the contexts surrounding learners’ engagement processes (i.e. variables such as age, gender, ethnicity and income), other researchers such as Göncü, (1999) argue that such descriptors are insufficient to understand the more particular aspects of context that impact upon learners’ engagement. Rather than adopt the universalist position that certain aspects of the individual’s mind, actions or needs are vital and so reside within all societies and across all historical time frames; researchers adopting a cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) perspective emphasise the culturally situated and inter-subjective qualities of engagement. Researchers such as Gaskins (2000) and Esmonde and colleagues (2011), for example, have adopted a pluralist approach and explored different variants of notion within specific, local contexts, while others such as Rainio (2008) and Finn and Vandermaas-Peeler (2013) focus on patterns of interaction as young people learn under adult guidance.

### *From models to modality: engagement in the field of art*

While the concept of engagement has developed into a burgeoning research programme in the psychology of education, the notion of engagement is grounded in much older philosophical traditions in art education. In order to build up a more comprehensive picture of how the notion of engagement is deployed in this field, it is useful to broaden the scope of the background analysis to include a consideration of more general trends in art practice, as this will have influenced successive generations of art educators who typically come into regular contact with these trends during their training. In fact, according to Berleant (1993), philosophical thought on the notion of engagement spans most of the history of the arts as they have functioned in diverse societies and can be traced back to ancient Greece with Aristotle's theory of catharsis. Notwithstanding this rich historical precedence, Berleant points out that the notion of engagement has taken on increased importance in more recent times. Indeed, according to Berleant, the notion of engagement captures a twentieth-century reaction in the art world against the European romantic tradition that tends towards the compartmentalisation and spiritualisation of art, viewing it as an elevated sphere of existence that is divorced from everyday human effort (see Shusterman, 1992). In a similar analysis, Fotiadi (2012) notes the rise of "socially engaged art" in the late twentieth century whereby a predilection has emerged among many artists for collaborative and participatory working formats in order to subvert the romanticist ideal of the innate creative vision of the unique artist.

In the field of art, then, it would appear that the notion of engagement arises in response to various socio-political and philosophical ideals. Because the notion is not deployed within the confines and structures of a conceptual model as is so often the case in the psychology of education; it is argued that the notion of engagement in the field of art is better thought of as a *mode* or *modality* through which certain types of information or values are communicated. In other words, it does not function in precisely the same manner as an abstract representation of a phenomenon whereby the elements deemed to encompass this phenomenon are explicitly defined, operationalised in more concrete terms and then considered alongside various other similarly derived phenomena. Instead of this more systematic approach, it is suggested here that, in the field of art more generally, the meaning of the notion of engagement is conveyed via more expansive units of language containing

various combinations of more abstract ideas that eventually become normalised with increased usage.

### **2.2.3 Methods and Procedures**

#### *Methodological approach to the analysis of the literature*

A meta-narrative mapping approach was adopted in order to determine the various ways in which the notion of *engagement* is used by educationalists and psychologists across a range of literature produced by specialists within each field. This approach to reviewing combines the rich analytical dimensions of traditional narrative research— storytelling, historicity, context and human relations—with the comprehensiveness and rigour of systematic literature reviews and seeks to tease out the over-arching storylines of different research traditions over time. As Greenhalgh and Heath (2010) describe, this is done by asking four key questions: how is the topic conceptualised in each separate tradition?, what are the key theories?, what are the preferred study designs and ways of knowing? and what are the main empirical findings? Thus, the primary consideration is not “what is the best approach to researching this topic?” but, rather, “what can we learn from the range of different approaches?”. Consequently, it is particularly suited to exploring tensions between different research traditions and making sense of conflicting findings.

According to Smith (2000), most narrative researchers would probably agree that a narrative refers to an account of events that features a mixture of story-like constructions, descriptions, interpretations, expectations and related material. From a narrative theory perspective, then, the accounts contained within research publications are characterised by a particular perspective, whereby the author’s disciplinary point of view determines what is most significant, as well as being embedded within a particular context, whereby they become subject to external influences such as historical period, physical surroundings and social setting (Smith, 2000). Therefore, in order to adequately consider the impact of these various layers of context surrounding the research literature, a three-staged analysis was conducted drawing upon Zilber, Tuval-Mashiach and Lieblich’s (2008) model. This encourages an initial exploration of the more concrete elements of context as evident within the text under consideration, before moving on to those more abstract elements of context that are found to reside beyond it. From here it is suggested that a systematic exploration of

the linguistic features within that text is conducted with reference to both these layers of context.

In order to investigate these more concrete contextual elements in the present analysis, a preliminary content analysis was conducted on larger samples of articles retrieved using the database cataloguing information. This preliminary analysis served to capture the essential features of each discipline's knowledge-base on engagement and served as a useful device for refining key areas for further enquiry. Thus, following the formation of questions arising from these preliminary analyses, the focus turned to the text themselves and the prevailing language and imagery used by art educationalists and psychologists to "tell the story" of their work. Comparable texts were grouped together on the basis of common themes and shared linguistic devices and the overall key findings and implications for future practice were distilled through an iterative process of cross-comparing texts and considering these texts with respect to the existing conceptualisations of the context surrounding each literature base.

#### *Sampling strategy for the preliminary content analyses*

Although the popularisation of the notion of engagement in education is often traced back to the 1990s<sup>2</sup>, the origins of the concept certainly predate this with the educational philosophies of Dewey (1938) and Freire (1998) along with Astin's work on student involvement (1984) being cited as important forerunners to the development of this field (McMahon & Portelli, 2004; Trowler & Trowler, 2010; Zyngier, 2008). Although it is difficult to ascertain the precise reasons for this increasing and more explicit interest in student engagement in more recent years, it is likely that with the rise of the positive psychology and positive youth development movements in the 1990s, scholars were bolstered in their efforts to consider well-being and optimal functioning in more sustained ways rather than being constrained by an exclusive focus upon "fixing" supposed human deficits. In light of this particular trend, the preliminary literature search was conducted on articles published from 1990 onwards to the most recent research available in 2013.

The ERIC and PsycINFO databases were used to search for literature within the respective disciplines of art education and the psychology of education. However, the coverage of

---

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Fredricks et al. (2011).

literature within each database sometimes spans beyond publications in these disciplines. Therefore, rather than obtaining a randomised sample from a dataset containing all potentially relevant papers, the electronic catalogue was first used to sort all papers retrieved according to their overall relevance for the current purposes. Following a series of trial searches, it was decided to select peer-reviewed articles from academic journals which were retrieved within each database using the search term *engag\** since the latter Boolean operator permitted a range of terminological variants such as “engage”, “engagement” and “engaged”. In the case of the ERIC database, the term “art” was added to the search operators in order to retrieve articles focused upon issues in art education, but without limiting the search to a small collection of dedicated art education publications. It is important to acknowledge that the decision to limit the literature search to the immediate family of terms around “engagement”, rather than, for example, including related concepts such as motivation, participation and student involvement, creates the possibility that some potentially relevant literature could have been excluded from the analysis. However, because the aim of the current review was to move towards a more in-depth linguistic analysis, priority was given to the principle of precision rather than that of coverage when considering the capacity of the databases to retrieve relevant articles. The databases were also used in order to specify literature that applied to a wide spectrum of school-going age groups, i.e. from pre-school age (2–5 years) to adolescence (13–17 years).

A more purposeful strategy was required when sampling the articles retrieved from each catalogue because the aim of the current review is not to seek a single “correct” answer to what constitutes learner engagement, but rather to examine the complexity of different conceptualisations of this notion. Therefore, when the literature was refined by the aforementioned inclusion and exclusion criteria, a series of preliminary content analyses were conducted on the various literature bases in order to more carefully consider the selection process for the next phase of the analysis. As Booth (2011) points out, this strategy is better aligned with more iterative approaches in qualitative research whereby questions, samples, data collection and analysis procedures are constantly refined and optimised in response to emerging insights



## 2.2.4 A preliminary content analysis of the art education and psychology of education literature

### *Rates of publication.*

When the entire yield of articles featuring adolescent and child populations was classified according to year of publication, it was found that research output on the topic of learner engagement did not gather pace in either field until the 2000s. Indeed, as Table 2.1 shows, of the 648 articles indexed by the PsycINFO database under the major subject heading of 'student engagement', the vast majority of psychology articles on student engagement were published between 2010 and 2013. Although there were no articles indexed under 'student engagement' in the ERIC database for art education in 1990s, the rate of publication featuring the notion of engagement has grown from just 12 articles in the 1990s and risen to 71 articles between 2010 and 2013. Thus, it appears that the notion of a research field explicitly dedicated to matters of *student engagement* is a rather new phenomenon in psychology but one that has rapidly grown in the past few years. In the field of art education, while this notion has not crystallised into a dedicated area of scholarly expertise, the usage of the term in publications has also seen a rapid increase in recent years.

Table 2.1

*Number of published articles retrieved on student engagement from 1990 to 2013 in the fields of psychology of education and art education*

Time Period	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2013
Psychology	4	227	417
Art Education	12	106	71

### *Methodologies employed.*

A large majority of the articles indexed by the PsycINFO database under the major subject heading of 'student engagement' (507 out of 648 articles) were classified as having adopted a quantitative research methodology. In contrast to this heavy focus upon empirical research using quantitative approaches, in the art education literature we see a much lower degree

of emphasis upon such kinds evidence—of the 355 articles retrieved from the ERIC database on learner engagement, only 61 articles had been catalogued according to any research methods deployed and indeed, where details of methods did exist, these were distinctly qualitative: 12 case studies and 10 interview-based studies.

#### *Key topics featuring in the literature.*

The subject descriptors assigned by the databases to the sampled literature were used to determine the key topics which appeared alongside the notion of learner engagement. Once generic categorisations (i.e., those categories that operate at such a global level so as not offer a great deal of further insight into the content/substance of the article itself, e.g., “art education”, “learner engagement”, “art”) were eliminated from the analysis of subjects covered by the art education literature, the most prominent themes to emerge were “teaching methods” (45 articles), “art activities” (45 articles) and “creativity” (17 articles). However, if one attends to the specific topics featuring in the psychological literature on engagement in the domain for education, we see no such emphasis upon learning processes.

Instead, an analysis of the key topics attributed to this literature by PsycINFO reveals that “academic achievement” was by far the most common topic to be attributed to the articles (135 articles), distantly followed by “student attitudes” (70 articles). Conversely, the theme of “student achievement” was not attributed to any of the art education literature in the current analysis. This is an especially noteworthy finding as it potentially signals a degree of epistemological dissonance between psychological perspectives on engagement in education and those of art educationalists. Consequently, this was noted as an issue warranting further investigation.

#### *Implications of the preliminary analyses for the meta-narrative analysis.*

From the analysis thus far, we have seen how the level of scholarly interest in learner engagement among art educationalists and educational psychologists has followed a similar trajectory, with levels of interest growing rapidly since the 2000s. Nevertheless, while art educationalists tend to reflect upon engagement as it is manifested in the creative process, educational psychologists tend towards empirical research using quantitative methodologies. The strong focus upon academic achievement within the latter research

effort raises questions regarding the extent to which quantitative methods are favoured among psychology of education researchers because indicators of academic achievement readily exist in numeric forms that can be morphed into a statistics to test hypotheses and generate explanations (Hayden, 2011). Indeed, since the 1990s scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the manner in which education policies in many countries have been reformed in an effort to raise standards by intensifying the manner in which students' and teachers' outputs are compared and judged against a normative template of fixed indicators. However, it has been argued that the emergence of this so-called "performativity culture" sets up a great deal of tension between the manner in which teachers are, on the one hand, encouraged to innovate, take risks and foster creativity (all essential components of art education) and on the other, are made subject to accountability regimes based on national assessment data, inspection outcomes and performance-related career progression (Burnard & White, 2008; Craft & Jeffrey, 2008; Elliott, 2001; Turner-Bisset, 2007). In fact, the trend towards standardising assessment in art education has been strongly criticised by various prominent art educationalists who argue that basing students' assessments upon a formalised, exclusive selection of artistic elements (e.g., tone, composition, etc.) is reductive, de-contextualised and wholly unsuitable for the purposes of an art education that seeks to accommodate students' personal interests and facilitate imaginative responses to unique ideas (Eisner, 1996; Gardner, 1992). With these issues in mind, then, the extent to which psychology of education approaches to engagement might serve to place it at odds with the ideals and stances of art educationalists will be considered in the forthcoming meta-narrative analysis.

### *Sampling strategy underpinning the meta-narrative analysis*

In order to consider the extent to which there might be a degree of dissonance between the disciplines surrounding the role of student engagement in relation to student achievement, attention was devoted to those psychology articles that were indexed by PsycINFO under the theme of "student achievement". The retrieved articles under this index were sorted according to topical relevance and a sample of the 20 highest ranking articles were selected from the total set of articles compiled by the catalogue. In order to permit a more focused analysis upon the discipline of the psychology of education, all non-psychology and multi-disciplinary journals were eliminated from this selection. The selected articles were then systematically sub-divided into two groups and analysed separately in order to consider

whether this sample size was large enough to ensure a sufficient range of psychological approaches to the subject of student achievement, as well as to ensure that there was some degree of overlap between these approaches so that increasing the sample size would not shed much further light on the central issues under investigation. A data extraction form was developed in order to summarise the macro-textual features of sampled articles that included: key topics, sample size, methods, participants and research region (see Table 2.2). Both samples had similar characteristics as they were dominated by empirical research (18 articles), most of which was questionnaire-based, quantitative research. Nevertheless, each sample featured a smaller number of research articles where other research methods were adopted including interviews, observations and secondary data analysis as well as two review papers considering wider theoretical issues. In addition, each set of sampled articles spanned six peer-reviewed journals and contained research that was conducted in a range of different regions including the USA, South Korea, the Philippines, Russia, Australia, Western Europe and Japan.

As no retrieved art education articles were indexed according to the theme of “student achievement”, the full range of indexed themes was used as the basis for sampling. The retrieved articles were sorted according to topical relevance and an initial sample of 20 articles was selected from the highest ranking articles compiled by the ERIC database. This set of articles was then systematically sub-divided into two groups and analysed separately, in the same manner as the psychological literature, in order to consider whether this sample size was sufficient for the current purposes. Again, a data extraction form was developed in order to summarise the macro-textual features of the sampled articles (see Table 2.2). Because empirical research was relatively rare (only two articles), the selected texts were coded according to the overall literary form they took. The majority of articles in both samples were critical reflections on teaching practice, with the remainder of articles being a mix of advisory pieces on learning activities and teaching techniques and critical commentaries on various classroom issues. Because the range of topics in the sampled art education literature was broad but heavily dominated by a single publication entitled *Art Education*, it was decided to expand the original sample to 26 articles spanning over 11 different journals. It must be conceded that since both sets of articles were dominated by practitioners based in the USA, there is a possibility that the issues and concerns covered within the selected set of publications are more reflective of concerns that do not arise in school systems elsewhere. Therefore, although a small number of the sampled art education

articles were produced in other regions including Canada, Australia and Uganda, the psychology of education articles clearly have a much wider range of international perspectives.

**Table 2.2***The Sampled Literature*

<b>Psychology of Education</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Area of Interest</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Research Region</b>
<b>Sample 1</b>					
Lee & Reeve	2012	Motivation, teachers	Questionnaires, statistical analysis	8 high-school teachers and 340 students	South Korea
King, McInerney & Watkins	2012	Social goals, achievement goals	Questionnaires, statistical analysis	1147 secondary school students	The Philippines
Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White & Salovey	2012	Achievement motivations, Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological theory	Interviews, questionnaire research, statistical analysis	48-1389 students (9 - 15 years)	USA, Russia
Elliott & Tudge	2012	Emotional climate, achievement	Class observations, statistical analysis of school data	1,399 fifth- and sixth-grade students	USA
Martin	2012	ADHD, personal best goals, academic achievement	Questionnaires, statistical analysis	87 students with ADHD, 3374 non- ADHD students	Australia
Plenty & Heubeck	2013	Mathematics, academic motivation, academic achievement	Questionnaires, statistical analysis	519 students, grades 7-9	Australia
Motti-Stefanidi & Masten	2013	Immigrants, resilience, academic achievement	Comparative analysis of research findings	Existing literature on academic achievement of immigrant children	Western Europe, North America

Psychology of Education	Year	Area of Interest	Methods	Sample	Research Region
Upadaya & Salmela-Aro	2013	Contextual factors, academic achievement	Comparative analysis of existing theory and research	North American and European literature on engagement	Western Europe, North America
<b>Sample 2</b>					
Ainley & Ainley	2011	Achievement emotions, enjoyment, interest	Secondary analysis of questionnaire data	>400,000 15-year-old students	PISA data from 57 countries
Ladd & Dinella	2009	Classroom participation, academic achievement	Questionnaires, statistical analysis	383 children (grades 1-8)	USA
De Castella, Byrne & Covington	2013	Fear of failure, motivation, self-handicapping, academic achievement	Questionnaires, statistical analysis	1,423 Japanese & 643 Australian high school students	Japan, Australia
Irvin	2012	Resilience, African American students, low-income backgrounds, academic achievement	Questionnaires, statistical analysis	335 6th-9th grade students	USA
Fantuzzo, Le Boeuf, Rouse & Chen	2012	African American boys, risk, resilience, academic achievement	Secondary analysis of of public administrative data and school district records	889 third-grade students	USA
Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni	2013	School belonging, academic achievement	Questionnaires, statistical analysis	572, 13-19 years olds/9th-12th grade students	USA

Lam et al	2012	Academic achievement, gender, contextual supports	Questionnaires,statistical analysis	3420 students (7th, 8th, and 9th graders)	12 countries in Europe, Asia, North America
Mouratidis, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Michou & Soenens	2013	Self-determination theory, achievement goals, motivation,parenting	Questionnaires,statistical analysis	923 students (grades 7-12)	Belgium
Wu, Hughes & Kwok	2010	Teacher–student relationship quality, Growth trajectories, academic achievement	Interviews, questionnaire research, cluster analysis	706 students (grades 2-3)	USA
Wang , Willett & Eccles	2011	Measurement invariance, perceptions of school, student behaviours, academic achievement	Questionnaires,statistical analysis	1103 middle school students	USA
Wang & Peck	2013	Mental health, academic achievement	Questionnaires,Interviews and secondary data analysis	1025 9th and 11th grade students	USA



Art Education	Year	Topic/Area of Interest	Literary Form	Population	Research Region
<b>Sample 1</b>					
Barrett, Everett & Smiguel	2012	Aesthetic thinking, drawing elicitation techniques	Empirical	Children (5-8 years old)	Australia
Brinda	2008	Reading motivation, theatrical production	Reflective	Adolescent students	USA
Baylin	2010	Photography, connections between emotion and cognition	Reflective	Adolescent students	USA
Brisco	2012	Creative problem solving	Advisory	High school students	USA
Bruce	2011	Story-boarding, text visualisation	Reflective	High school students	USA
Haskins	2012	Montessori learning, classroom environment	Advisory	Montessori school children	USA
Ng-He	2010	Community development	Reflective	Undergraduate students	USA
Rose	2012	Family heirloom project, art history	Reflective	Undergraduate students	Australia
Scholes & Nagel	2012	Inclusive education, creative arts curriculum	Empirical	Primary school pupils	Australia

Art Education	Year	Topic/Area of Interest	Literary Form	Population	Research Region
<b>Sample 2</b>					
Cummings	2012	Strategies for motivating learners	Reflective	Middle school students (grades 9-12)	USA
Christopoulou	2013	Political cartoons	Reflective	5 <sup>th</sup> grade pupils	Greece
Armon, Uhrmacher & Ortega	2009	Art and literacy, self-portraits	Reflective	Children from low-income backgrounds	USA
Bryant	2010	Creative problem solving, computer animation	Reflective	High school students	USA
Chin	2011	Aesthetic experiences in learning	Advisory	K-12 pupils	USA
Darts	2011	Socially engaged art in school	Reflective	High school students	USA
Sickler-Voigt	2011	Puppetry, use of found objects	Advisory	Pupils (grades 6-12)	USA
Danko-McGhee & Slutsky	2007	Critical thinking, Reggio Emilia approach	Reflective	Children aged 2-8	USA
Andrews	2010	Student-centred approaches to art lessons	Reflective	High school students	USA
Lenz Kothe	2012	Participatory practice, interactive art galleries	Critical commentary	Gallery visitors	Canada
Heise & MacGillivray	2011	Implementation of an art programme in a homeless shelter	Evaluative	Children in a homeless shelter	USA

<b>Art Education</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Topic/Area of Interest</b>	<b>Literary Form</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Research Region</b>
Levine	2009	presentation of an art problem for learners	Reflective	8 <sup>th</sup> grade pupils	USA
Ruich	2012	Photography, social documentation of play	Advisory	Pupils (grades 5-8)	USA
Shaffer	2011	Museum education for young children	Critical commentary	Children aged 3-6	USA
Nagawa	2012	Interactive tours of artists' studios	Reflective	Gallery visitors	Uganda
Mitchell, Whitin & Whitin	2012	Quilting, multi-disciplinary approaches to education	Advisory	Elementary school pupils (grades 4-8)	USA
Kind, Irwin, Grauer & De Cosson	2005	Holistic curriculum perspectives, artist school visit	Reflective	3rd-4 <sup>th</sup> grade pupils	Canada

## 2.2.5 The sampled literature: a meta-narrative analysis

### *Meta-narrative 1: engagement as an embedded entity*

The performance of schools is typically measured by governing bodies using criteria such as standardised test scores, academic grades and on-time graduation rates, and a great deal of the psychological research sampled on learner engagement also incorporated this kind of data. Indeed, in the current sample of psychology of education literature, 13 out of a possible 18 empirical articles employed some standardised measure of academic attainment in order to examine the role of student engagement in learning outcomes. Measures here included national and regional test scores (Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Rouse, & Chen, 2012; Martin, 2012), standardised tests of vocabulary, literacy, numeracy and other academic skills (Ladd & Dinella, 2009; Wu, Hughes & Kwok, 2010) and grades collected from students' report cards (Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Irvin, 2012; Moreira, Dias, Vaz, & Vaz, 2013; Wang & Peck, 2013). However, it is important to note that in no place across these 13 studies is the concept of engagement placed within a crude, deterministic style of analysis whereby learner engagement is hypothesised to produce an exclusive, one-way effect on academic performance. Rather, a range of other social and psychological factors are considered in relation to educational engagement, including relatively fixed socio-demographic traits (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parental education), as well as more malleable intra-personal features such as students' personal value of a school subject (Ainley & Ainley, 2011) and children's ratings of the quality of their relationships with their teachers (Wu, Hughes & Kwok, 2010). In fact, many researchers in the sampled set of literature argued that our understanding of such intra-personal factors should be further developed by considering how they might be distributed in different patterns and configurations across different groups of participants. For example, research teams such as Mouratidis, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Michou, and Soenens, (2013) focused on the different aspiration profiles of student groups (i.e., features of students' own personal aspirations as well as those favoured by their parents) in an attempt to examine how differences in aspirations between groups might influence how students engage in learning and associated academic outcomes. Others such as De Castella, Byrne and Covington, (2013), conducted a cluster analysis of students' orientations to academic success in order to consider the relationship between the attitudes of these students towards academic success and levels of academic engagement.

The current review also revealed a strong research interest in the incorporation of alternative, non-academic indicators of student success into analyses. This included reduced rates of truancy, suspensions and exclusions from school (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2013), lower levels of student aggression (Irvin, 2012), better mental health (Wang & Peck, 2013), as well as lower levels of burnout, increased positive emotions and higher rates of life satisfaction (Upadaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). At first glance, it might be argued that the inclusion of such non-academic factors in empirical analyses could still facilitate the development of fixed indicators that might comfortably serve as mechanisms for regulating educators. However, as Elliott reminds us, “evidence of measurable improvement, defined as bringing performance up to a fixed standard, is not the same as evidence of development, defined as an open-ended and ongoing process over time” (2001, p. 285).

Beyond the incorporation of alternative indicators of student success, in some of the sampled studies, an explicit attempt is made, not simply to supplement, but to actively shift the emphasis away from fixed, external indicators of scholastic success (i.e., grades and test scores) in order to examine teachers’ and students’ own perceptions of the educational process. For example, by comparing teacher’s estimations of students’ levels of motivation and engagement with students’ self-reports, Lee and Reeve (2012) found that teachers’ engagement estimates corresponded significantly to their students’ self-reports while their motivation estimates did not. This led them to argue that teachers’ monitoring and awareness of students’ behavioural, cognitive and agentic signals is an important skill in its own right since it enhances a teacher’s capacity to forge positive relationships with students and respond to their needs during lessons. In another research study, Martin (2012) examined the potential of facilitating students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder to develop personal best goals. In this study, engagement is not vested with predictive powers with respect academic success, instead, it is treated as a valued outcome in its own right. Thus, within the research of scholars such as Lee and Reeve (2012) and Martin (2012), the concept of engagement does not serve as a normative template from which predictions of academic success can be made, rather, the unique properties of this concept are probed in relation to their informative potential for instructors seeking to develop their practice. Interestingly, despite being designated as research on “academic achievement”, some of the sampled articles did not actually incorporate any standardised measures of academic attainment. Rather, this research focuses entirely upon the antecedents to engagement. For example, Wang, Willett and Eccles (2011, p. 477) dedicated their research efforts towards

testing the fit of a second-order multidimensional factor model of school engagement, using large-scale representative data from 1103 middle school students. Therefore, rather than testing the relationship between engagement and academic outcomes; Wang and colleagues instead extended their analysis in an alternative direction, using covariance and mean structures to consider whether discrepancies exist between groups with respect to the affective, cognitive and behavioural dimensions of engagement. Indeed, in this study differences were found between students when they were segmented by gender and ethnicity and this led the authors to call for further research into the possible causes and consequences of such differences.

Another interesting example of this tighter focus on the antecedents to engagement is King McInerney, and Watkins' (2012) investigation of the role of social goals in academic engagement among 1147 students in the Philippines. King and colleagues argue that in studying engagement, educational psychologists have been overly focused on achievement while overlooking the potential role that social goals such as social status, affiliation, approval and responsibility might play. Interestingly, by using questionnaires that incorporated various items to measure the latter constructs, it was found that social status goals were the most highly endorsed goal for the students sampled. It is pointed out that this finding corroborates much previous research, which indicates that achieving social status through education is a relatively common perceived goal of education among various groups in Asia more generally (Kumar & Maehr, 2007; Lee, 1996; Salili, 1996; Sue & Okazaki, 1990) as well as within the Philippines (Bernardo, Salanga, & Aguas, 2008; Church & Katigbak, 1992).

Upon conducting the preliminary content analysis, the question was raised whether the strong focus in the psychology of education literature upon academic achievement in relation to student engagement places it at odds with an art education that actively seeks to resist reductive styles of assessment that judge artworks according a narrow selection of formal elements. The meta-narrative review of the psychology of education literature on engagement has revealed a trend towards highly complex forms of analysis whereby a wide range of social and psychological factors are considered in relation to educational engagement. We have also seen some cases where there is a strong research interest to incorporate alternative, non-academic student outcomes and other cases where the emphasis shifts away from fixed, external indicators of scholastic success (i.e., grades and

test scores) towards teachers' and students' own perceptions of the educational process. It is difficult to see how such exploratory styles of research could be swiftly co-opted by a performative educational system for more regulatory ends, since such systems are typically characterised by an overriding drive to maximise beneficial outcomes while simultaneously minimising resource inputs (Duineveld, Beunen, Van Assche, During & Van Ark, 2009; Elliott, 2001). Thus, to derive a cost-effective solution response to problems such as student disengagement, guidance from the psychology of education literature sampled here would need to be selective to a point that risks obscuring the original complexity of the analyses.

*Meta-narrative 2: engagement as participative, immersive experiences for learning*

In contrast to the psychology of education literature, which is typically based upon structured empirical investigations, the literature within the field of art education tends to be produced by practitioners who are reflecting upon their own classroom experiences where they often have to exhibit thinking and behaviour that is more rapid, intuitive and holistic. In fact, the majority of the articles sampled (15 out of 26) are written from the perspective of a practitioner reflecting upon their involvement in a wide array of art projects and activities including: puppetry (Sickler- Voigt, 2011), photography (Ruich, 2012), quilting (Mitchell, Whitin & Whitin, 2012) cloudmaking (Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2007), map-making (Ng-He, 2010), self-portraiture (Armon, Uhrmacher & Ortega 2009), story-boarding (Bruce, 2011) and socio-historical explorations of family heirlooms (Rose, 2012). Within these accounts, however, what is meant by learner engagement is rarely explicitly defined<sup>3</sup>. Rather it appears that the notion of engagement acts more as an interpretative device, used by practitioners to denote a certain kind of desirable aesthetic experience. Indeed, an analysis of the linguistic features of the sampled art education texts reveals some of the more tangible properties assigned by practitioners to these experiences. For example, whereas in the psychology of education literature, the notion of engagement is much more likely to appear in the form of an abstract noun (i.e. as the concept or notion of "engagement"), in the art education literature, it is more likely to be deployed to convey action (i.e., using a verb form so that the teacher is "engaging" pupils in/with something/some action). In fact, if we compare the average proportions of noun with verb forms of engagement in both samples of literature, we find that in the art education sample, writers use approximately twice as many verbs

---

<sup>3</sup> Kind and colleagues (2005) discussion of 'engaged pedagogy' and Levine's (2009) provision of a definition are two notable exceptions here.

forms as noun forms, and in the psychology of education sample, the noun form appears almost six times more than the verb form. This subtle linguistic difference suggests that within the psychology of education literature, there is more emphasis upon formally abstracting the notion of engagement from various other real-world phenomena and then considering it alongside various other factors that correspond to a particular conceptual framework. In the art education literature, however, the focus remains on classroom action.

Indeed, further textual analysis finds that art educators frequently deploy the notion of engagement when articulating a desire to move away from activities that position students as bystanders and move towards activities that encourage them to think, act, and develop ideas. For example, when outlining the benefits of using storyboarding processes with high school students in order to visualise texts, Bruce draws a contrast between the process of creating images with that of reading:

one problem with reading is that it is often seen by students, particularly reluctant readers, as a passive activity . . . creating storyboards encourages students to engage and interact— or in a reader-response term, transact—with the text. (Bruce, 2011, p. 79)

In addition, in many of the sampled art education contexts, the role of the teacher is not necessarily confined to one who organises and oversees at a distance; rather, the teacher can participate in the action too for this provides him/her with an opportunity to attend to the concrete details of students' behaviours and interactions in order to obtain clues in relation to their interests, difficulties and levels of engagement. For example, Baylin attends to such details in his reflections on his students' response to using a large aperture and shallow depth of field during a photography lesson:

Even more telling about their understanding and appreciation for this new 'tool' were their subsequent self-directed efforts. They started using it by choice, in other words, transferring their knowledge from the first assignment to self-selected situations, a sign of genuine learning. (Baylin, 2010, p. 97)

Arguably, this focus upon learners' signals of engagement within the sampled art education literature is where we begin to see a convergence with approaches in the psychology of education, since, as was outlined above, once the latter makes a departure from an exclusive focus upon academic achievement as a desired outcome, we begin see a focus upon alternative, relational properties of engagement that includes the teacher's capacity to estimate students' engagement levels by attending to various behavioural, cognitive and



agentic signals. It is also worth noting that there is widespread evidence of the deployment of psychological concepts in the art education literature.

For example, we see art educators draw upon psychological ideas such as novelty for the arousal of interest (Bruce, 2011), autonomy and relatedness in the classroom (Haskins, 2012), emotional intelligence (Scholes & Nagel, 2012), resilience (Heise & MacGillivray, 2011) and socially mediated learning (Shaffer, 2011). The frequent deployment of psychological concepts such as these indicates art educators wish to actively make sense of their classroom experiences by applying those ideas that they deem most relevant to understanding their practice. Moreover, it is suggested here that the collaborative development of a more formalised evidence base for such practice might to be a fruitful undertaking, especially since, as we have seen above, psychologists of education have already begun to incorporate alternative and non-standardised indicators of successful student outcomes into their analyses and would no doubt, profit considerably from further consideration of how this might apply in the case of creative activities.

Indeed, one area of inquiry that might represent a useful starting point for such collaborative work is in the non-human dimensions of educational engagement since this receives a great deal of attention in the art education literature yet was virtually absent from the sampled psychology of education literature. Within the art education articles, attention is not only paid to the teacher as the key facilitator of student engagement; art objects, tools and materials are also conceived as bridging devices between the learner and various forms of knowledge. Indeed, much of the language used in the sampled literature vests art forms with assistive properties to suggest that the learner's interactions with these forms indirectly bring about deeper levels of understanding.

Thus, many of the art education papers sampled are replete with examples of indirect causative processes being attributed to art forms, so that, for example, photographic images are considered to 'provide [emphasis added] students a historical visual stepping-stone to document and examine the everyday play-engaged lives of both children and adults' (Ruich, 2012, p. 25), and a collection of handmade quilts are regarded as something that 'offers [emphasis added] a rich opportunity for students in grades four through eight to develop appreciation for pattern, rhythm, and innovation while learning about history' (Mitchell & Whitin, 2012, p. 26). In general, the type of learning experience that art educators

are alluding to here is immersive so that the learner becomes involved in activities that appeal to their senses and trigger powerful semantic, psychological associations (Dede, 2009). In fact, throughout much of the art education literature we see frequent allusions to classroom experiences that require pupils to shift between an exocentric and an egocentric frame of reference so that perspectives on art forms are derived not only via the physical senses but also through one's own inner repository of personal beliefs, emotions and values. So while some authors explicitly celebrate the sensory possibilities afforded by art objects and activities, many others draw attention to the value of providing opportunities for learners to draw more personal meaning from the process by emphasising the potential for connections to emerge between the world of the learner and the art they experience. Thus, while Shaffer (2011, p. 45) recommends "bringing objects into the gallery that children can touch" in order to permit sensory exploration, Christopoulou (2013, p. 47), emphasises the capacity for collaborative discussion during art projects to generate coming to generate "greater personal and communal awareness" among students. From reflections such as these, it would seem that a major advantage of immersive art experiences, is that they have the potential to draw on the strengths of both frames of reference whereby the learner is involved in embodied, concrete learning as well as developing more abstract, symbolic insights with reference to one's inner world of personal meanings. Indeed, the specific emphasis on forging connections between learner and art form, and the quest for deriving personal meaning in the process strongly resonates with Belenky's (1986) notion of "connected" approaches to knowing whereby, rather than focusing upon a critical form of analysis that excludes personal feeling and beliefs; the learner actively seeks to understand others' ideas and points of view as well as emphasising the fundamental value of personal experience and the context in which these views have arisen.

### **2.2.6 Conclusion**

At the outset of this literature review, it was noted that characterisations of the relationship between the disciplines of art education and the psychology of education have ranged from one of distrust and divide to that of mutual interests and reconciliation. In light of their common focus upon the issue of *learner engagement*, the aim of the current analysis was to assess the extent to which approaches towards this notion within each discipline might be complementary, convergent or inherently conflicted. Upon conducting the preliminary content analysis, a strong distinction was drawn between how the notion of engagement is

deployed within each discipline and this raised various questions regarding the extent to which they might be divided on the issue of educational achievement. It was feared that the dominance of quantitative approaches and deployment of standardised assessment scores in the psychology of education would be incommensurable with the more intuitive, immediate and complex reality of teaching to foster unique, individual creative expressions that are typically valued by art educators.

However, the meta-narrative analysis revealed a much more complex state of affairs. In the psychology of education literature it was found that the notion engagement was not conceived as a crude determiner of academic performance, but instead, was considered as a dynamic phenomenon that arises within a unique social context. Indeed, many of the psychology of education studies that were sampled focused upon various antecedents to engagement, some of which were relatively fixed socio-demographic traits while others were more malleable intrapersonal features. As a result, it became difficult to position such approaches within the general mode of a performative culture that seeks to make schools subject to increased accountability using a limited selection of outcome indicators. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that there still remains a gap between what such research can address and its application to teaching practice since teachers do not work within systems that are composed of abstract, self-contained categories. In fact, there have been repeated calls from educational psychologists for further research on student engagement in the context of school-based interventions since it is noted that efforts here have been particularly sparse (see Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Reschly & Christenson, 2012). It is argued here that another way in which psychology of education researchers might profitably move towards bridging the gap between psychological theory and teaching practice would be to work collaboratively with art educators in order to benefit from the latter's expertise in areas such as the culture of the participating students, the nature of the school context and the community systems that would need to cooperate with researchers if effective changes are to be delivered. Thus, the goal of this collaborative work would be to bring together two different kinds of expertise to increase knowledge on engagement processes via research that is theoretically informed as well as culturally situated.

Notwithstanding the gap between theory and practice, the meta-narrative analysis also revealed that there was a small but noteworthy shift in the psychology of education analyses away from fixed, numerical indicators of academic success, towards a more detailed focus

upon the antecedents to engagement as a significant outcome in itself, the incorporation of alternative, non-academic outcomes and the examination of more immediate elements of the educational process such as students' personal goals and teachers' perceptions of their students. With the latter phenomena being more directly forged out of classroom interaction, it is here that approaches in the psychology of education and art education begin to converge. One important implication of this convergence is the potential that arises for art educators to contribute towards the expansion of alternative avenues for psychological analysis. For example, in the art education literature, beyond the focus upon human relations in the classroom, we also see the relationship between humans and objects taking on more prominence in analyses. Indeed, it was found that art educators frequently vested the art objects themselves with assistive properties so that learners' experiences of viewing or usage of these objects led to more engaging experiences, which in turn, was considered to foster deeper levels of understanding. However, in the psychological approaches to learner engagement reviewed in this paper, the silent assumption that operated was the central role of human-to-human interaction when considering the various dimensions of learner engagement. Of course, as a social science, psychology, has long faced charges of anthropocentrism (for example, see Yerkes, 1933); however, by attending to the unique insights brought by the specific concerns of art educators, it is suggested that one profitable future direction in the psychology of learner engagement would be to more seriously consider the role of cultural artefacts in shaping learning.

### **2.3 The psychology of student engagement- A preliminary overview of key theoretical perspectives**

Despite the increasing interest amongst psychologists in the concept of learner engagement; when the literature comprising this field is considered as a whole, it becomes clear that it has not yet crystallised into an easily definable set of competing theoretical perspectives. Indeed, Fredricks, McColsky, Meli, Mordica, Montrosse & Mooney (2011) note the use a broad range of terms amongst researchers in the field (e.g. student engagement, school engagement, academic engagement, engaged time, student engaged learning, academic responding) as indicative of various theoretical influences. Nevertheless, throughout this varied assemblage of writings, it is possible to identify five emerging approaches in the psychology of engagement. In the sections which follow, I will conduct a critical overview of these perspectives, illustrating, where possible, with relevant action-based research in arts

education. The aim here is broadly ontological in orientation, that is, the forthcoming review will survey the range of approaches to engagement that have arisen in the psychology of education with a view to arriving at a greater critical understanding of the assumptions about the nature of learner engagement that are embedded within these different perspectives as well as a consideration of their implications for the forthcoming case study research.

### **2.3.1 The Participation-Identification Model**

Finn's (1989) participation-identification model was the one of the earliest psychological models to explicitly elaborate a number of key variables underlying educational engagement. Finn's interest in student engagement stems from concerns surrounding school drop-out rates in the United States and a desire to develop a deeper understanding of the processes that lead to this. As a result, his model has its roots in the risk factor prevention paradigm, a pragmatic approach that seeks to identify factors in the key domains of a young person's life (i.e., family, school, community, psycho-emotional) that statistically increase the likelihood of an undesirable outcome (i.e., in this case, dropping out of school). Thus there is a strong influence of the life course approach to analysis whereby the importance of timing is considered crucial to understanding the casual links between exposures and outcomes within an individual life, across generations and on a population level. Therefore, for Finn, dropping out of school is not considered as an isolated event, rather it is regarded as the manifestation of much longer-term processes of disengagement from school. Therefore, it is argued that how pupils spend their time is important for fostering an interest in school.

According to this model, educational engagement emerges from an interaction between *student behaviour* (in the form of participation in school-related activities such as attending classes, paying attention, following classroom rules, completing assignments, taking initiative and participating in extra-curricular activities) and *student affect* which manifests itself in feelings of belonging and valuing school. According to Finn (1989), this separation of the behavioural from the emotional dimension is important because it allows practitioners to focus upon their efforts on changing certain student behaviours, for example, boosting student participation in extra-curricular school activities so that these positive experiences foster increased levels of identification with school more generally. Beyond this, the participation-identification model holds that the likelihood of school completion is maximised when students maintain multiple and expanding forms of participation in school-

relevant activities and that failure to participate in such activities may have negative effects on school-related outcomes.

Large-scale cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs are the principal means which researchers have tested the Participation-Identification model since these approaches are especially valuable when seeking to track changes over time (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). For example, Mahoney, Cairns and Farmer (2003) used interview data which was collected from 695 U.S. students at a number of intervals over a period of approximately 10 years and found that consistent extra-curricular activity participation during adolescence predicted a higher level of formal educational attainment in young adulthood. Accordingly, they suggest that participation in extracurricular activities may afford opportunities to build interpersonal skills and construct positive plans for the future, which are, in turn, associated with high educational status by young adulthood. More recently, Dotterer, McHale and Crouter (2007) used a daily diary procedure to examine the participation of 140 African American, sixth to ninth grade pupils in structured and unstructured out-of-school activities by conducting a series of home telephone interviews. Regression analyses revealed that when parent education and school grade were controlled for; more time in extracurricular activities was associated with greater school self-esteem and school bonding. (For similar studies employing longitudinal approaches see Cooper, Valentine, Nye & Lindsay 1999; Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt, 2003)

Nevertheless, the research results on the participation-identification model are far from conclusive. For example, using national longitudinal data on pupils when they were in grades eight to twelve (ages 13-18) and of third-level education age, Finn and Owings (2006) found that whilst participation in extracurricular activities was related to entering a post-secondary institution, it was not related to credits earned or completion of a programme. Furthermore, the measure employed to test pupils' level identification with school, i.e., the perceived usefulness of school subjects, was not related to any post-secondary outcome. In a similar study, Ou, Mersky, Reynolds and Kohler (2007) found that neither academic engagement nor school attendance were significantly related to criminal convictions or incarceration in later life.

### *The Participation-Identification model in Education Programme Evaluations*

The Participation-Identification model has also been applied in the evaluation of educational programmes, the most prominent among these being the “Check & Connect” programme in the U.S.A. (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). This intervention was developed to promote the engagement of marginalized students by establishing mentorship programmes, working in partnership with families, monitoring progress and developing social and academic competencies. In their evaluation of this programme, Anderson, Christenson, Sinclair and Lehr (2004) examined whether the closeness and quality of relationships between intervention staff and 80 participating elementary and middle school students was associated with improved engagement in education. Using self-report questionnaires and teacher ratings of academic and social engagement, it was found that after various demographic risk factors and baseline attendance figures were controlled for, the quality of the relationship between the student and the mentor was a significant predictor of increased educational engagement in terms of school attendance. In addition, mentors’ perception of their relationships with students was associated with various teacher-rated aspects of educational engagement (e.g., preparedness for class, work completion, persistence).

In terms of the specific impact of arts-based interventions in the enhancement of educational engagement, Smithrim and Uptis (2005) examined the effects of a Canadian school-wide, arts education approach, *Learning Through the Arts* (LTTA), on a range of educational outcomes. Using a sample of over 6000 students and their parents, teachers and principals, data was gathered on student achievement, attitudes towards the arts and schooling, and out-of-school activities both at the outset of the LTTA programme and at the end of three years. When compared to a control group matched for socio-economic status and baseline achievement, it was found that grade-6 girls (ages 11-12) in LTTA schools were happier to come to school than those in the control schools. In addition the results indicated that the LTTA programme had a statistically significant positive effect on student achievement on a mathematics test dealing with computation. Smithrim and Uptis speculate that the differences in computation scores were due to the fact that the research mathematical tasks require students to pay closer attention in order to arrive at a solution and that participation in the arts may have fostered more sustained attentiveness and increased investment of cognitive energy during detailed tasks.

### *Evaluating the Participation-Identification Model*

As the research detailed above demonstrates, the participation-identification model helps to illuminate a developmental cycle that begins with early forms of student behaviour and how, over time, this leads to either further bonding with school or increased disengagement from this institution. Indeed, further longitudinal research of this nature should help to specify the relationship between various trajectories of engagement and student outcomes over time, as well as helping to clarify the importance of different factors in relation to these outcomes (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Notwithstanding, the inconclusiveness of some findings with respect to longer-term outcomes (i.e., high-school credits earned, criminal convictions and incarceration), it can nevertheless be concluded that, when considered as a whole, the above studies demonstrate that engagement is a malleable state, open to contextual conditions and can be shaped by interpersonal and task characteristics (Finn & Zimmer, 2012).

Despite these theoretical gains, however, the participation-identification model has been criticised by Dei, Mazucca, McIsaac and Zine (1997) for failing to adequately specify the psychological processes which lead to students becoming disengaged. Indeed, that is why Smithrim and Upitis (2005) are left to speculate upon the transfer of attention-holding skills from art to mathematics when attempting to explain why students participating in the LTTA programme activity obtained higher scores in a mathematics task when compared to non-participating students. In addition to a lack of conceptual detail, it is argued that Finn's model fails to account for those students who continue to identify with the school system, but nevertheless, due to the manner in which the external, structural conditions of this system are met with, have become marginalized from mainstream education. To add to this critique, it is argued here, that various operationalisations of Finn's model could be accused of overlooking cases where students who for various reasons of their own, consciously and actively resist partaking in extra-curricular activities and in-school interventions. In other words, by solely relying upon quantitative indicators of participation in the activity of interest (e.g., measuring participation according to units such as time spent on activity, attendance figures, frequency/consistency of participation), students are conceived as either active participants in school-related projects or as passive abstainers from such activities. Consequently, the means by which they might exercise agency to moderate and determine how they participate, remain overlooked. Consequently, it is argued that future research



efforts in this field would benefit from further deconstructing the meaning of participation to account for a wider range of behaviours and orientations to school activities.

### **2.3.2 Self-Determination Theory**

In order to develop a deeper understanding of the processes of gradual disengagement from school, other psychologists have attended more closely to the intra-personal dynamics which underlie specific patterns of engagement. The most prominent theory influencing researchers interested in these dynamics is that of self-determination theory (SDT) which was initially developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in the 1970s and has since been elaborated and refined by numerous other scholars from around the world. The work of Deci and Ryan emerged from their interest in the study of intrinsic motivation, i.e. actions motivated for their own sake, out of interest and enjoyment. This was in contrast with much of what dominated the field of motivational research between the 1930s and the 1950s when experimental psychologists were primarily concerned with what moved a resting organism into a state of activity and typically tested out their ideas by undertaking deprivation-related experiments where, for example, hungry rats were deprived of food and curious monkeys were placed in rooms without visual stimulation (for further details see Weiner, 1990).

From the 1960s the study of motivation shifted from animal to human research, and there was an increase in the accepted importance of cognitions as determinants of behaviour and the centrality of achievement strivings as opposed to deprivation-related behaviour (Weiner, 1990). Indeed, Deci and Ryan's research and theoretical approach stemmed from an initial interest in what would happen when people were rewarded for doing something which they were already quite willing to do in the absence of rewards (Gagné, & Deci, 2014). Informed by their investigations into such external influences on an individual's intrinsic motivation, the basic tenets of self-determination theory became rooted in organismic assumptions which propose that people are innately curious, possess a natural love of learning and desire to internalize the knowledge, customs and values around them (Niemi & Ryan, 2009). Nevertheless, Ryan and Deci (2000) are also careful to point out that psychological growth cannot be taken as a given or something that happens automatically, but rather should be viewed as a potential that requires nurturance.

The most prominent model of educational engagement which draws upon the basic tenets of this theory is Connell and Wellborns' (1991) self-system model of motivational development. This model incorporates the basic SDT premise that humans possess three fundamental psychological needs which are based in physiology and are evolutionarily adaptive: the needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Whilst relatedness refers to the need to experience oneself as connected to other people, competence refers to the need to experience oneself as effective in one's interactions with the physical and social environment. Autonomy, then, refers to the need to express one's authentic self and to experience the self as the source of one's own actions. According to the self-system model, school contexts influence engagement by either supporting or undermining these needs. From these experiences, children cumulatively construct views of themselves which in turn, shape their perceptions of school and guide their future actions (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Reeve, Ryan, Deci & Jang, 2007). In other words, the effects of competence, autonomy and belongingness on academic achievement and adjustment are not direct, but mediated by levels of engagement.

Connell and Wellborns' model has gone on to inspire a burgeoning world-wide research programme as researchers have been keen to assess its internal validity. For example, Nie and Lau (2009) conducted a hierarchical linear modelling analysis on questionnaire data obtained from 3196 Grade 9 (ages 14-15) students in Singapore to reveal that student perceptions of a caring and structured classroom atmosphere were positively related to their classroom engagement as measured by self-reports of levels of attention, effort, and participation in classroom activities. Using a similar approach, but this time with 3248 students in Canada, Taylor, Leves, Gagnon, Kwan and Koestner (2012) found that those who reported higher levels of school need satisfaction were more likely to be academically engaged (as measured by assessing intentions to drop out of school) and obtain higher grades. Raufelder, Kittler, Braun, Lätsch, Wilkinson and Hoferichter (2014) also used self-report questionnaire data to find a positive association between levels of satisfaction for the three basic psychological needs (competence, relatedness and autonomy), and items measuring both emotional (e.g., *class is fun*) and behavioural (e.g., *in class I work as hard as I can*) aspects of school engagement within a sample of 1088 seventh and eighth grade students in Germany (ages 12-14).

Other researchers have concentrated their efforts upon assessing the impact of just one of the core psychological needs on student engagement. For example, Assor, Kaplan and Roth (2002) investigated the impact of various types of autonomy-enhancing and autonomy-suppressing teacher behaviours by using data collected from a questionnaire completed by 498 pupils from grades three to five (ages 8-11) and 364 pupils from grades six to eight (ages 11-14) in Israel. Surprisingly, it was found that teacher behaviours that foster the relevance of school activities and avoid the suppression of student criticisms were better predictors of emotional and behavioural engagement than allowing criticism and encouraging independent thinking. Meanwhile, Furrer and Skinner (2003) examined the role of 641 children's (ages 8-12) perceived relatedness in their classroom engagement over the course of a school year in the U.S.A. Regression and cumulative risk analyses revealed that children's reports of relatedness predicted changes in classroom engagement over the school year and while levels of perceived relatedness decreased between 5<sup>th</sup> grade (ages 10-11) and 6<sup>th</sup> grade (ages 11-12), the influence of this factor on engagement was stronger in the latter group.

### *Self-Determination Perspectives on Engagement in Arts Education*

As of yet, no peer-reviewed studies explicitly looking at the role of engagement in art education from an SDT perspective have been forthcoming. Instead, the focus has been on motivation as an antecedent to other publically observable outcomes which might be considered relevant to arts practice. For example, Marziyeh, Ejei, Hejazi and Tabatabaee (2014) have conducted research using self-report questionnaires and used the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking<sup>4</sup> with 500 high-school students in Iran to reveal that students' perceived levels of autonomy predicted their levels of test performance, thus suggesting that learner motivation and creative output is greater when learners feel that they have more control over their environment. Byron and Khazanchi (2012) came to a related conclusion when they conducted a meta-analysis of 52 experimental studies which employed tasks designed to measure creativity, and 8 non-experimental field studies which used questionnaires and external ratings systems for creative efforts. The authors concluded that rewards contingent

---

<sup>4</sup> A test of creativity, originally involved simple tests of divergent thinking and other problem-solving skills. It is scored in terms of the number of ideas generated, the extent to which they are elaborated in detail, the number of different categories of ideas, as well as the statistical rarity of those responses.

on task performance and completion tended to have a slight negative effect on levels of creativity, while rewards contingent on creativity (e.g., when individuals are given more positive, contingent, and task-focused performance feedback and are provided more choice) are more positively related to performance on creative tasks. While these findings broadly support the self-determination position on the benefits of intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic forms of motivation on creativity, a word of caution is necessary since the operationalisations of creativity within these studies do not take into account the cultural climate surrounding the creative outputs of their participants and more often than not, the tasks used are not anchored in real-world problems nor are they aligned to a particular set of skills required within a specific arts domain (see Lemons, 2011). Indeed, we would do well to remember that creativity is a complex phenomenon since it is a function of judgments made by people who are guided by the trends and traditions of a particular time and place, as well as being constructed through an interaction between producer and audience (Csikszentmihalyi & Rich, 1997).

### *Evaluating the Self-Determination Perspective on Engagement*

By generating fairly consistent evidence that there is an association between the perceived satisfaction of students' needs and various indicators of their emotional and behavioural engagement, the SDT basic needs research provides insights into why certain educational contexts promote student engagement while others undermine it. However, as Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris point out (2004), while much of this research has tested for a direct link between students' perceived needs satisfaction and their levels of engagement, the extent to which certain characteristics of educational environments are mediated by students' perceptions of their needs and, in turn, the influence students' perceptions have upon their actions, remains under-explored. Therefore, the intermediary psychological processes that lie between students' perceptions of their educational environments and the manner in which they behave in the classroom warrants further investigation. Indeed, as Fredricks and colleagues go on to point out, the reality is that classrooms are constrained situations and students often have to perform an activity for external reasons, whether they like it or not. Therefore, how students and teachers interact in order to negotiate between the various competing demands they face whilst also working towards the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs is a matter that demands more situated and detailed considerations.

Beyond these more conceptual issues, the review of the SDT literature above also demonstrates that the research on students' perceptions of their educational environments tends to be conducted on large scale samples of students in mainstream schools, using student self-report questionnaires. Although there is no claim amongst SDT theorists that quantitative methods have any epistemological priority over qualitative ones (in fact, Ryan and Niemiec (2009) are explicit in advocating pluralism in this regard), it is understandable that researchers are prioritizing large-scale, quantitative research in an attempt to establish the reliability, generalizability and validity of the formal aspects of the theory. Again, however, Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) express concern over the narrow array of methods being used by researchers in the SDT field and have called for richer, more detailed descriptions of classroom contexts in order to enhance our understandings of the ways in which students respond to their educational environments. Indeed, it is argued that this is interesting from a theoretical point of view because although SDT takes a universalistic stance in positing the same set of needs in all humans, it still retains a more particularistic stance in relation to the capacity of many cultural forms to facilitate the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Chirkov, Ryan & Willness, 2005). Therefore, it is important to assess the extent to which students' needs are being met across a range of different educational contexts, including settings which act as an alternative for students who have had difficulties in mainstream education.

### **2.3.3 Phenomenological Approaches**

Thus far, the approaches surveyed (i.e., the participation-identification model and the self-system models of motivation) have tended to retain a strong empirical separation between the various emotional, behavioural and cognitive elements considered to underlie the engagement processes. Whilst such conceptual separations may be necessary in order to operationalize and examine rather complex scientific models; other researchers, however, have argued that, in practice, such distinctions may be rather artificial. As a result, many have sought to examine educational engagement as it emerges during concrete interactions between a person and his or her educational environment (Hidi, Renninger & Krapp, 2004). The key aim within phenomenological approaches to engagement is to capture the continuous interaction between the various psycho-social processes (e.g., levels of interest, attention, frustration; reaction times to stimuli, cognitive processing times, use of learning strategies etc.) during an educational encounter. This aim arises out of a critique of

conventional psychology research for its limited focus upon capturing the fluid and changing nature of emotions and affective states. For example, a retrospective provided by a student on a particular event is not necessarily the same as the state experienced while doing the task. As Ainley (2006) points out, post-event reflections risk being coloured by the participant's knowledge of how the event turned out. Thus, it is argued that to access students' on-task affective states; a measure that directly monitors those changing states as they occur is needed.

Adopting these key principles, but working more directly from the basic tenets of flow theory, Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider and Shernoff (2003,  $N = 526$ ), focus on the phenomenological aspects of high involvement in classrooms whereby educational engagement is conceptualised as a state of deep absorption in an activity. When elaborating his theory of flow, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) originally identified numerous characteristics of flow experiences including a loss of self-consciousness, a transformation in perception of the passage of time and a lacking of a sense of worry about losing control over one's situation. However, when applying the principles of flow to educational engagement, Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider and Shernoff (2003) conceptualise high involvement in classrooms as a culmination of concentrated attention, intense interest and high enjoyment as opposed to apathy and lack of interest in instruction. The authors also draw upon flow theory to propose that students will experience increased engagement in their education when the perceived challenge of the task and their own skills are high and in balance, the instruction is considered relevant and their learning environment is believed to be under their control. To operationalise these principles, Shernoff and colleagues (2003) developed an *experience sampling method* (ESM) whereby, in response to a signal from an electronic pager at eight random moments in school time over the course of a week, participants' reported on their location, activity, affective and cognitive experiences. Analysis of this data revealed that amongst the students sampled (ages 15-18), the vast majority of their time was spent in individual learning or passive instruction. In fact, only 14% of their time was spent engaging in interactive learning activities. Nevertheless, students reported higher levels of interest in interactive and individual activities as opposed to passively attending to information in lessons. The perception of high challenge was significantly associated with higher levels of engagement so that optimal engagement appears to be promoted by a moderate difference between the challenge of the task and the level of the individual's skills. Interestingly, when Shernoff and colleagues compared levels of engagement by subject, art received the highest composite score. In fact, students reported that although art was not

experienced as academically intense, participation in this subject increased their mood and motivation.

### *Phenomenological Approaches to Engagement in Educational Evaluations*

Other researchers have concentrated their analyses upon individual school subjects and educational initiatives thus distinguishing between the different responses elicited by the various activities that they encompass. For example, Shumow, Schmidt and Zaleski, (2013) have studied 73 high school students' experiences (ages 14-18) during biology classes in ways that lead to some surprising insights on learner engagement. They measured students' subjective experience of engagement (using items on challenge and concentration), motivation (using items on enjoyment, interest, relevance and success) and learning (using items on learning science, doing science and thinking about science) in each classroom repeatedly over a period of 5 consecutive school days and used hierarchical linear modelling to examine students experiences in lab classes compared with non-lab, classroom-based activities. Contrary to their expectations, students reported less engagement in labs compared to other science class activities, i.e., labs were perceived as considerably less challenging than other work and did not require as much concentration. However, students' perceptions of learning, succeeding, or thinking about science did not differ between lab and non-lab activities. Consequently, the authors point out that while labs hold great potential for learning, much depends on how they are conducted.

In a similar study, Vandell, Shernoff, Pierce, Bolt, Dadisman and Brown (2005) compared the engagement levels of middle school students (ages 11-14) who were participating in after-school programmes ( $n = 160$ ) with middle school students not participating in such programmes ( $n = 31$ ) by signalling both groups after school hours over two weeks. Students were asked to report on their perceived levels of challenge, skills, and concentration, enjoyment, choice, interest and importance in relation to the activity they were undertaking at the time of the signal and they were also asked to indicate their feeling states with respect to eleven emotions using a 4-point scale. It was found that programme youth spent more time than non-programme youth on activities such as sports, art, academic enrichment, community service, and homework. While programme and non-programme youth did not differ significantly in their feelings of intrinsic motivation, concerted effort, or positive emotions in activities that took place outside of the school context, programme youth

reported feeling more intrinsically motivated, less apathetic and more positive emotions when participating in their after-school programmes. On the basis of these results, the authors conclude that after-school programmes provide youth with substantially different opportunities and experiences than they would otherwise have elsewhere thus indicating their importance in the learning and development of those participating.

### *Evaluating Phenomenological Perspectives on Engagement*

One of the major advantages of phenomenological approaches to engagement is that they allow us to demarcate how aspects of subjective experience are linked to contexts and to individual differences, thereby allowing us to understand engagement processes more directly. From the research outlined above, it appears that certain aspects of students' experience are associated with enhanced aspects of learner engagement (e.g., concentration in after school programmes, mood in class) while other particular elements of school life have proven less successful than hoped for (e.g., lab-based lessons in biology). Phenomenological approaches to engagement in educational activities are thus particularly suited to allowing us to understand the more immediate aspects of educational experiences, activities, actions or events and opens up possibilities to track changes and developments of these experiences over time. Indeed, although dedicated research on participants' experiences of art programmes has not yet arisen in this field, because phenomenological perspectives place an emphasis upon the more immediate aspects of educational experiences, the research making up this field tends to be grounded in real-world educational situations. Indeed, by offering educators a detailed portrait of the way students feel when they are partaking in educational activities as well as further information on the broad conditions that are be present during these experiences, phenomenological approaches can help practitioners to identify areas to target in order to improve the quality of the immediate experience for students. In addition, teachers and researchers alike can broaden their inquiry to consider other more complex experiential synergies to implement in the classroom for maximum impact, such as finding ways to combine spontaneity and planning, structure and freedom, work and play in their students' projects and assignments (Whalen, 1998).

Nevertheless, studying activities, emotions, and engagement with young people as they go about their daily routines represents a practical challenge. Activities occur in multiple



locations, and it is difficult for observers to follow students for extended periods or to ensure that young participants will always be willing or able to fully co-operate with experience sampling data gathering processes. In addition, some groups of students might present considerable practical challenges in terms of having sufficient insight into their emotional states so as to provide an accurate answer and persisting with the experience sampling questions over time e.g., pre-school children, children with special educational needs etc. Overcoming these practical research issues, will likely continue to demand the creative efforts of researchers in empirical efforts to come.

#### **2.3.4 Cultural Historical Activity Theory**

Thus far, the reviewed psychological approaches engagement have attempted to analyse the construct by conceiving it as comprised as a system of interrelated parts and by employing standardized universal descriptors (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, income etc.) when analysing its surrounding context. However, there is a growing interest in cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) approaches to engagement since these involve a deeper consideration of the particular processes by which social, cultural and historical factors shape human engagement in learning. The CHAT approach to engagement is interdisciplinary in nature and historically linked to the work of Soviet Russian psychologists, L. S. Vygotsky, A. R. Luria, and A. N. Leontiev. It is worthwhile noting that there has been much debate about the extent to which these three thinkers represent a single theoretical perspective. According to one line of interpretation, those who follow Vygotsky have focused attention on processes of mediation (with a particular emphasis on speech), adopting mediated action in context as a basic unit of analysis. This line of work is often referred to as sociocultural research. By contrast, followers of Leontiev are said to choose activity as a basic unit of analysis (Daniels, 2001; Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 2010). For the present purposes, however, these distinctions will be treated as differing formulations of a single family of theoretical commitments and, instead, the focus will remain on the primary assumption from which CHAT analyses follow: the idea that human learning is pervasively shaped according to normative cultural expectations which are diverse and change historically.

Indeed, as Engeström (2008) argues, the CHAT approach to engagement calls for an exploration of what the notion of engagement means within local contexts with particular emphasis upon those set of actions that followed a stable, culturally respected order.

Engeström (2008, p.257) also emphasises that engagement in action is typically not merely an individual string of actions, it usually consists of multiple parallel actions, performed by different participating actors. As such, CHAT researchers do not exclusively focus upon an individual's engagement, but rather conceive of engagement as an intermediate unit of analysis which, as Engeström argues, is best situated somewhere between individual action and collective activity. From this perspective then, it becomes more useful to speak of several different types of "engagements" within different contexts as opposed to the more universal singular form.

### *CHAT perspectives applied to educational engagement*

Esmonde, Takeuchi and Radakovic (2011) adopt a pluralist approach to engagement in order to develop a more detailed understanding of how a group of four students and their teacher jointly engaged in a series of collaborative group tasks. The researchers focused upon video recordings of "difficulty episodes", that is, situations in which high school students were working in groups and trying to resolve some disagreement or difficulty they faced with their mathematical work. From this analysis, two separate activity systems in which the participating students engaged were identified: students engaged in satisfying explicit or implied teacher expectations were identified to be part of the "doing school" activity system, while students engaged in discussing or debating mathematical content were considered to be part of the "learning mathematics" activity system. Esmonde, Takeuchi and Radakovic (2011) point out that it was possible for students to be engaged in both activity systems simultaneously but also possible for them to engage in only "doing school" (e.g., copying another student's work without looking at it) or only "learning mathematics" (e.g., discussing some mathematical topic that did not form part of the class material or that was not appropriate at that point in time). Thus, it is pointed out that although there was substantial overlap between doing school and learning mathematics, the two activity systems were sometimes in conflict since the very nature of classroom life demanded that students attend to these two different motives in their work so that they were not free to pursue mathematical understanding in any way they chose.

Gaskins (2000) adopts a broadly similar approach to Esmonde, Takeuchi and Radakovic (2011) when conducting a case study exploring Yucatec Mayan children's learning and patterns of activity in their everyday surroundings. Three principles of engagement are

derived from extensive ethnographic documentation of the children's activities. Since Mayan economic production is still located in the family, the first principle is that Yucatec Mayan children's daily activities are primarily structured by adult work activities rather than around the children's interests and desires. Secondly, since the Maya typically believe that the source of development is internal and pre-programmed, there is little emphasis placed upon monitoring children's developmental progress nor with structuring experiences to improve or hasten it. Thirdly, when young children's help is not needed by adults, they are usually expected to find something to do on their own or with their siblings. Thus, although Mayan children are often involved in ongoing work activities, they are also given a substantial degree of independence in deciding what they will do in the interim. By articulating these three principles of engagement, Gaskins argues that because Maya children do not have very similar lifestyles to many children in Western cultures, it becomes possible to develop a greater understanding of what engagement might mean in the former context without overlooking important cultural practices or interpreting certain behaviours as evidence of developmental deficits.

As well as considering learner engagement as a culturally-situated phenomenon, another strand of CHAT research is inspired by the Vygotskian emphasis on the interactional mechanisms through which a child, under the guidance of an adult, learns new skills. As Edwards (2005) points out, CHAT researchers are interested in the individual's capacity to align their thoughts and actions with those of others in order to interpret and respond to problems. Indeed, Rogoff (2003) theorized that parents often guide their children in everyday tasks without the intent of being instructional and points to a common form of assistance she calls "guided participation" whereby caregivers interact with their children in order to build upon current understanding to reach new understandings. As part of this process, shifts occur in the children's responsibility over time and the child learns through an apprentice-style relationship in the context of a culturally relevant task (Rogoff, 2003).

Thus, rather than treating children as isolated individuals, the emphasis in CHAT approaches to engagement turns to the social interactions and relationships of young people as they interact in various learning contexts (de Haan, 2001). For example, Finn and Vandermaas-Peeler (2013) compared parental teaching and social interactions during a cooking activity with children under two conditions: when only one child was present (dyadic interaction) and with two children involved (triadic interaction). Their observations revealed that parents

interacting with only one child initiated more teaching opportunities, engaged in more positive social exchanges with their child (e.g., laughing and joking) and spent more time with a positive emotional focus as compared with parents interacting with two children in a cooking activity. In contrast, parents in the triadic condition focused more on attention management and role negotiation between their two children. Finn suggests that these differences might have occurred because parents in the triadic condition were more focused on successfully completing the task and avoiding conflict between siblings rather than on potential literacy and numeracy teaching opportunities.

### *Evaluating the CHAT perspective on Engagement*

The CHAT approach to engagement involves an emphasis upon engagement as a culturally-situated and inter-subjective phenomenon. A departure is made from universalist positions which treat engagement as a phenomenon solely residing within certain aspects of the individual's mind, actions or needs and as stable across all historical time periods, cultures and societies. Instead the CHAT research outlined above has proceeded from the assumption that human learning is pervasively shaped through human interaction and according to normative cultural expectations. We have seen that while some researchers such as Gaskins and Esmonde and colleagues have explored different variants of notion within specific, local contexts, others such as Finn focus on the interactional mechanisms through which young people learn under adult guidance. Despite the prevalence of this context-specific research, studies specifically dedicated to exploring student engagement in art education have yet to emerge. It is also worth noting that CHAT perspectives have been greeted with some criticism. For example, commentators such as Bakhurst (2009) argue that while CHAT might have the capacity to produce useful heuristics for the analysis of social activity, he questions the notion that these are theoretical since the concepts and positions which are elaborated upon have minimal predictive power. While Bakhurst (2009) is right to argue that CHAT does not encompass any specific predictions with regard to how activity systems and patterns of engagement develop or evolve over time, it is argued here that this does not necessarily render it theoretically vacuous. While a theory may have limited predictive value, it may still offer much value in terms of its potential explanatory power. In its broad-based focus and attention to the influence of social relations on phenomena like learner engagement, it can be argued that CHAT is well-placed to highlight the limitations of existing predictions in this area, to direct our attention towards possible oversights in existing theories as well as to

develop explanations about why such theories might fail to adequately capture learners' experiences.

CHAT approaches are also critiqued for what is perceived as an excessively localized focus since this risks overlooking some of more universal forces that impact upon individual learners. As we have seen thus far, despite the fact that there are a rich array of approaches to engagement which have emerged in psychology, the CHAT studies reviewed above demonstrate, little attention is given to these. As such, these analyses leave themselves open to the risk of underestimating the extent to which these individual-level cognitive, affective and behavioural processes influence patterns of learner engagement. Moreover, it might also be said that by adopting a pluralist approach to engagement, infinite possibilities open up for the identification of localized versions of engagement to the extent that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to adjudicate between these different versions. Nevertheless, it is argued here that despite this, we would do well to remember that there is nothing within the ontological underpinnings of CHAT approaches that would preclude the incorporation of additional elements (psychological concepts or otherwise) within an analysis; in fact, Engeström (2008, p257, p.259) himself, describes activity theory as “an open theory that is constantly enriched” and in a discussion on the notion of engagement, acknowledges “that it makes sense to explore alternative frameworks and dimensions with which [notions of engagement] may be analysed and potential typologies may be tested”.

### **2.3.5 Composite Models of Engagement**

Recently, there has been a trend towards the development of more comprehensive, multi-dimensional models of engagement by bringing together a wider array of academic, behavioural, cognitive and affective factors. In these cases, the concept of engagement has been elevated to the level of a meta-construct which brings together many previously separate lines of enquiry (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). While two-, three- and four-subtype models are prevalent across this literature, Reschley and Christenson (2012) highlight that there seems to be agreement amongst researchers in the field that at a minimum, engagement is comprised of participatory behaviour and some affective component. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of consensus on both the number of subtypes that are included under the wider umbrella of engagement as well as how to define this more complex construct. For example, Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris (2004) conceptualize

engagement as a multidimensional construct which centres on participation in academic, social and extracurricular activities; positive and negative affect arising from interactions with teachers, peers, and school; as well as personal investment in school, self-regulation and striving for mastery in learning tasks. Meanwhile, Martin (2007) proposes a model of engage four higher-order factors (adaptive cognition, adaptive behaviour, maladaptive behaviour, maladaptive cognition) and eleven lower-order factors (valuing, mastery orientation, self-efficacy, persistence, planning, task management, disengagement, self-handicapping, uncertain control, failure avoidance) and places these along a continuum to distinguish between factors associated with engagement from those associated with disaffection.

The psychometric properties of multidimensional conceptualizations of school engagement such as those of Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris (2004) and Martin (2007) are typically examined by conducting confirmatory factor analyses using questionnaire data obtained from large-scale samples. For example, Wang, Willet and Eccles (2011) tested the fit of Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris' (2004) tripartite model by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis on questionnaire data which was obtained from a large sample of 1103 middle school students in the USA. Their findings supported the Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris' (2004) model since the six first-order factors (attentiveness, school compliance, valuing of school education, school belonging, self-regulated learning and cognitive strategy use) could reliably be grouped further into three second-order factors (behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement). In addition, cross-group variances between races and gender were confirmed to be on the same metric. Similarly, Liem and Martin (2012) have sought to validate Martin's (2007) model by performing confirmatory factor analyses on a series of large-scale data sets (samples range from  $N= 204$  to  $N= 21,579$ ) which were obtained by conducting questionnaires in various elementary schools, high schools and universities across Australia. Again, these analyses have offered support for a more complex model of engagement with statistically significant factor loadings revealed for the four primary dimensions of engagement as well as the eleven lower-order factors as hypothesized by Martin (2007).

Other researchers have sought to integrate pre-existing theoretical models in order to obtain a broader view on student engagement in school. For example, Wang and Peck (2013) employ both the self-system model of motivation (as detailed in Section 2.3.4) and stage-

environment fit theory<sup>5</sup> to examine whether adolescent developmental outcomes varied as a function of different combinations of cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement components. Using a sample of 1,025 students (aged approximately 14-18) in the USA, five different profiles of student engagement were identified in the analysis: highly engaged, moderately engaged, minimally engaged, emotionally disengaged, and cognitively disengaged. While the first three sub-groups had consistent scores across the three measured dimensions of engagement, the emotionally disengaged students (a sub-group comprising 10% of the total sample) were found to have the cognitive skills to progress in school (as measured by GPA scores), but did not like being there and presented the greatest risk for mental health problems (as measured by survey items relating to depressive symptoms experienced in the previous two weeks). Meanwhile, the cognitively disengaged sub-group had fewer symptoms of mental health problems than the emotionally disengaged students, even though the latter group was academically out-performing them. The authors note that the cognitively disengaged students may be overlooked by teachers even though they are at risk for academic failure precisely because they are doing well socio-emotionally and are not causing discipline problems. Overall then, findings such as these highlight that adolescents may experience a variety of different patterns of engagement, thus underscoring the idea that it is useful to examine each dimension of engagement individually, rather than focusing solely upon the simultaneous examination of patterns of multiple dimensions of engagement.

---

<sup>5</sup> A theory which identifies several aspects of secondary school environments that are incommensurate with adolescent motivational needs, including increased social competition, social comparison, and performance-oriented learning environments; limited opportunities for student autonomy and decision-making; and less caring and supportive teacher–student relationships (see Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan, & Mac Iver, 1993).

### *Composite Approaches to Participation in the Arts*

Composite approaches to engagement have also been applied within research on students' participation in art-based activities by Martin, Mansour, Anderson, Gibson, Liem and Sudmalis (2013). Using participation and educational outcome data collected from a sample of 643 elementary and high school students from 15 schools in Australia over the course of two school years, Martin and colleagues conducted a large-scale examination of the role of school-, home- and community-based arts participation in students' academic (e.g., motivation, engagement) and non-academic (e.g., self-esteem, life satisfaction) outcomes. Within this research arts participation was taken to comprise of numerous indicators including: receptive arts participation (i.e., participation from an audience perspective), active arts participation (i.e., personally involved in arts-based pursuits), parent– child arts interaction, home arts-based resources, external arts tuition, in-school arts tuition, and arts engagement (i.e., cognitive, affective and behavioural components of arts participation). Structural equation modelling of this data showed that even when controlling for socio-demographics, prior achievement, and prior variance in outcome measures, arts engagement and home-based arts resources and support were the most consistently positive predictors of school enjoyment and class participation. The authors argue that their findings suggest that practice should not simply be focused on the quantity of arts participation; but rather, there is a need to ensure quality factors such as engagement. In addition, it is argued that efforts might be directed to providing advice for parents on how to interact with their children about the arts (e.g., advice disseminated through newsletters, parent enrichment programs).

### *Evaluating Composite Approaches to Engagement*

Advocates of the composite approach argue that by directing attention towards the basic sub-processes that are typically subsumed by the notion of engagement, more promise is offered for the development of a more complete picture of student engagement which would, in turn, allow educators to target the specific behaviours, thoughts and actions required to enhance students' overall levels of engagement. Indeed, ecologically valid approaches to engagement depend upon considering the broader social context and we have seen that many composite models of engagement not only point towards outcomes of engagement, but also towards the various antecedents to engagement which are to be found



to vary amongst different sets of individuals. In addition to this, composite models present the opportunity to minimise some overlap between the constituents of engagement which have been proposed within different engagement theories. Indeed, of the perspectives on engagement reviewed so far, it is clear that there are indeed overlaps between perspectives. For example, the role of the skill of the learner according to flow theory bears much similarity to the role of the perceived competence of the learner as proposed by SDT. In addition, the importance of the learner's sense of relatedness (i.e., the perception of having positive relationships with peers and staff) considerably overlaps with the notion of school belonging in the participation-identification model since the latter notion strongly depends on the existence of positive relationships.

While composite approaches such as those detailed above help researchers to group various sets of inter-related variables and to consider how they are related to each other, Reschly and Christenson (2012) maintain that the notion of engagement across these approaches still suffers from the "jingle and jangle" problem whereby the same term is used to refer to different things (jingle) and different terms are used for the same construct (jangle). To illustrate their point they cite the example of two recent research classifications of the factor "perceived relevance of school". Whereas Finn (2006) classified this factor as "affective engagement"; Appleton Christenson, Kim, & Reschly (2006) characterized it as "cognitive engagement". Beyond these general concerns over conceptual refinement and clarity, Sinatra, Heddy & Lombardi (2015) have highlighted that even when measuring one clearly specified dimension of engagement, the other dimensions of engagement are still likely contributing to that evaluation. Thus, the risk of oversimplifying analyses is likely to be a more stubborn problem for researchers since it will not be solved by definitional debate alone.

Beyond this, I would add to Sinatra and colleagues (2015) that while the pursuit to produce a more broad-based analysis of engagement is worthwhile; there are, nevertheless, practical challenges which stem from the aggregation of such a large number of variables within research accounts. Indeed, when researchers incorporate such a vast array of factors into their analyses, it becomes difficult to retain the richer forms of explanation and analytical depth that emerged with earlier models and perspectives on engagement. This is because the various developmental dynamics that are embedded within different theoretical approaches to engagement may not always fit so neatly together to comprise a more global

model of learner engagement. Consequently, there may be times when researchers will be limited to integrating only those aspects of the theories under consideration that are compatible with each other. This is because each of the surveyed approaches to engagement are supported by different epistemologies and logical assumptions which point researchers in the direction of particular methods. For example, while the participation-identification model takes a relatively long-range view on learner engagement, by assuming substantial time lags between school experiences, behaviours, perceptions and outcomes; phenomenological approaches emphasise the immediacy of the lived experience of learning and its associated skills and challenges. Consequently, while longitudinal research designs are prominent within the former research field, experience sampling studies are more typical of the latter. To take another example, while the SDT approach assumes that the nutrients relevant to the individual learner's psychological needs are universal, CHAT focuses upon engagement as a culturally-situated phenomenon and is interested in the joint-interactions of teachers and learners that occur within particular socio-cultural spheres. As a result self-report questionnaires dominate the SDT research as large numbers of responses can be obtained and cross-compared in a relatively efficient manner, while ethnographic and observational studies are much more typical within the CHAT field as they allow researchers to obtain richer and more detailed information in order to account for the complexities that have come to characterize the groups they are interested in. Therefore, in order to move beyond an additive approach to synthesising engagement perspectives which simply focuses on combining the various conceptual elements of engagement theories whilst minimising overlap, it is argued that perspectives on engagement need further deliberation at a more global ontological level in order to more effectively draw upon the strengths and unique conceptual contributions of each perspective and to assess their practical utility for addressing different kinds of research questions. This will clearly necessitate complex, mixed methods research designs which, as of yet, have not come to the fore in the field of engagement research.

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

While there seems to be widespread agreement that the concept of engagement is a complex, multi-dimensional one, we have seen over the course of this literature review that there are multiple avenues of research which provide us with a range of different ideas about what might constitute engagement. Indeed, five emerging approaches in the psychology of

learner engagement were surveyed within this review: the participation-identification model, SDT, composite Models, phenomenological views and CHAT. The aim of this final section is to give a brief overview of the literature reviewed, to draw together some of the gaps and limitations identified in the literature and to identify the areas in which this thesis aims to make a contribution towards addressing some of these challenges.

As detailed in Section 2.3.1, the first theoretical perspective reviewed was the participation-identification model, which proposes that educational engagement emerges from an interaction between participation in school-related activities and feelings of belonging and valuing school. This model hypothesized that the likelihood of school completion is maximised when students maintain multiple and expanding forms of participation in school-relevant activities and that failure to participate in such activities may have negative effects on school-related outcomes. While this hypothesis has been met with some empirical support, the participation-identification model has been criticised for failing to adequately specify the psychological processes which lead to students becoming disengaged and for underestimating the means by which students might exercise some agency to moderate and determine how they participate in their education.

Section 2.3.2 explored the role of self-determination theory and the self-system model in investigating student engagement processes. According to the self-system model, children cumulatively construct views of themselves from their classroom experiences which, in turn, shape their perceptions of school and guide their future actions. Therefore, it is proposed that school contexts can exert a powerful influence on students' engagement in their education by either supporting or undermining their basic psychological needs. While SDT researchers have produced numerous large-scale studies containing fairly consistent evidence to demonstrate that there is an association between the perceived satisfaction of students' needs and various indicators of their emotional and behavioural engagement, the intermediary psychological processes that lie between students' perceptions of their educational environments, and the manner in which they behave in the classroom, remains under-explored. In addition, concerns have been expressed over the narrow array of methods being used by researchers in the SDT field, resulting in calls for richer, more detailed descriptions of classroom contexts in order to enhance our understandings of the ways in which students respond to their educational environments.

The third perspective examined in Section 2.3.3 was the phenomenological approach to educational engagement. This approach offers a detailed portrait of the way students feel as they are partaking in educational activities as well as the broad conditions that are present during these experiences. Consequently, phenomenological approaches can help to identify areas that educators can target in order to improve the quality of the immediate educational experience for their students with a view to enhancing their levels of engagement. Within the studies reviewed over the course of this section, researchers employed experience sampling methods to find that students reported higher levels of engagement when they participated in interactive and individual activities (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider and Shernoff, 2003), more academically challenging activities (Shumow, Schmidt and Zaleski, 2012) and in after-school programmes (Vandell, Shernoff, Pierce, Bolt, Dadisman and Brown, 2005). Despite the potential benefits such findings have for educators, it was noted that practical research issues may hamper research of this nature being conducted with certain populations who many find it overly challenging co-operate and persist with the experience sampling questions over time (e.g., pre-school children, children with special educational needs etc.).

The CHAT approach to educational engagement was reviewed in Section 2.3.4. This approach calls for an exploration of what the notion of engagement means within local contexts with particular emphasis upon those set of actions that followed a stable, culturally respected order. In addition, CHAT researchers conceive of engagement as an intermediate unit of analysis which is situated between individual action and collective activity. Over the course of the review, we saw that while some researchers such as Gaskins (2000) and Esmonde, Takeuchi & Radakovic (2011) explored different variants of notion of engagement within specific, local contexts, others, such as Finn, focused on the interactional mechanisms through which young people learn under adult guidance. It was pointed out that CHAT approaches have been criticized for not making any specific predictions with regard to how activity systems and patterns of engagement develop or evolve over time. While this is true, it was nonetheless argued that CHAT approaches retain an important analytical role due to the emphasis it places on socially situated relations and their potential to direct our attention towards possible oversights in existing theories.

Finally, in Section 2.3.5, it was noted that we have seen a trend within the engagement literature towards the development of more comprehensive, multi-dimensional models of

engagement which comprise of a wide array of academic, behavioural, cognitive and affective factors. For example, while Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris (2004) conceptualized engagement as encompassing a wide array of behavioural, emotional and perceptual factors; Martin (2007) proposed a model of engagement which contains four higher-order cognitive and behavioural factors and eleven lower-order factors. Others such as Wang and Peck (2013) have sought to integrate pre-existing theoretical models in order to obtain a broader view on student engagement in school. Advocates of the composite approach argue that this approach offers promise for the development of a more complete picture of student engagement. In addition, it was noted that composite approaches provide an opportunity to minimise some overlap between pre-existing engagement theories. Nevertheless, Reschly and Christenson (2012) have pointed out that these approaches are still beset by the “jingle and jangle” problem whereby the same term is used to refer to different things (jingle) and different terms are used for the same construct (jangle). In addition it was argued that the various developmental dynamics that are embedded within different theoretical approaches to engagement may not always fit so neatly together to comprise a more global model of learner engagement. Therefore, it was maintained that future attempts to draw upon more than one engagement theory would necessitate complex, mixed methods research designs which, as of yet, have not come to the fore in this field of research.

Overall, it is clear that researchers in the field of engagement research have covered much ground in a relatively short period of time, exploring many important issues including the role of students’ participation, feelings of belonging at school, basic psychological needs, thoughts and emotions during classroom activities and the role of the social and cultural contexts surrounding education. Nevertheless, throughout this literature review, certain limitations have been identified with respect to each of the various research sub-fields and, as a consequence, this thesis seeks to address several of these outstanding challenges. Firstly, in response to concerns which have been raised over the narrow array of methods being used by researchers in the SDT field (i.e., quantitative questionnaire research), this thesis adopts a multi-method, case study research design in order to provide a richer, more detailed description of the classroom contexts under investigation. Indeed, a more open-ended, comparative style of inquiry which draws on data obtained from multiple sources also provides more potential to explore the intermediary psychological processes that lie between students’ perceptions of their educational environments and the manner in which they behave in the classroom - processes which have been somewhat neglected in the large-

scale surveys of more primary theoretical constructs that currently dominate the field. Secondly, in response to concern that certain populations may find it excessively challenging co-operate and persist with research of a more phenomenological nature in which questions are continually posed to participating students as they carry out their daily activities, this thesis employs observations, interviews and field work in order to gain additional insights into students' perspectives and responses as they partake in classroom activities whilst minimizing the potential for the research to disrupt or place an undue burden on participants. Thirdly, while there has been a limited number of studies which explicitly address the role of art education in relation to student engagement from participation-identification, phenomenological and composite perspectives (see Smithrim & Uptis, 2005; Shernoff Csikszentmihalyi, Shneider & Shernoff, 2003; Martin, Mansour, Anderson, Gibson, Liem & Sudmalis, 2013), no peer-reviewed studies explicitly looking at the role of engagement in art education from SDT or CHAT perspectives have been forthcoming as of yet. Therefore, by drawing upon both these theoretical perspectives, the present thesis seeks to address this gap within the literature. Finally, it was noted that the various developmental dynamics that are embedded within different theoretical approaches to engagement may not always fit so neatly together to comprise a more global model of learner engagement. Therefore, in order to retain the unique contributions of both the CHAT and SDT perspectives (i.e., the CHAT emphasis on the particularistic elements of socially situated relations and the SDT emphasis on universal basic psychological needs), this thesis will triangulate data gathered using methods aligned with each of these perspectives. The epistemological considerations and methodological procedures governing this process of triangulation will be detailed in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter begins in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 with a consideration of the extent to which cultural-historical activity theory and self-determination theory are compatible with each other and the ways in which they differ. The aim is to bring together both perspectives in a more systematic way for the purposes of informing the research analysis. Following this, Sections 3.3 and 3.4 turn to more practical considerations. Section 3.3 presents the guiding framework for a case study approach which includes the pursuit of a contextual level of analysis and the incorporation of various SDT and CHAT conceptual tools. Section 3.4 details the procedures to be followed during the data collection and analysis phases of the research.

#### **3.1 Introduction to the Methodology**

Thus far, two broad-based literature reviews have been conducted. The first considered approaches to student engagement from the disciplinary perspectives of art education and educational psychology, while the second reviewed five emerging approaches in the psychology of learner engagement: the participation-identification model, self-determination theory (SDT), composite engagement models, phenomenological perspectives and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). Because no peer-reviewed studies explicitly looking at the role of student engagement in art education from an SDT or CHAT perspective have been forthcoming, the present thesis seeks to address this specific gap within the literature by drawing upon both in an integrated analysis. In order to move beyond an approach to integrating engagement theories by simply adding together their various core elements and eliminating overlaps, it was argued that deliberation of theories at a more global ontological level is required. This methodology chapter will take up this challenge in an effort to more effectively draw upon the strengths and unique conceptual contributions of the CHAT and SDT perspectives and to consider their practical utility for the current research.

### **3.2 Integrating CHAT and SDT Perspectives on Learner Engagement: Epistemological considerations for a unifying case study framework**

Although empirical findings are rapidly amassing in the field of student engagement and there have been some attempts to integrate emotional, behavioural and cognitive aspects of engagement into composite models; discussion of the philosophical foundations of these different approaches are rare. Indeed, Ladd and Dinella (2009, p.191) observe that there has been little attempt to conceptualize the forms and functions of engagement from a meta-theoretical perspective. Therefore, arriving at a more critical understanding of the assumptions embedded within existing approaches to engagement is hampered by the fact that the developmental dynamics underlying them are rarely referred to within the empirical research. However, failure to consider such issues when drawing upon multiple theories leaves several important questions unaddressed. For example, it is useful to consider whether the theories in question are addressing relatively independent aspects of human existence and so can either co-exist separately, or whether they contain comparable propositions which place them in competition with one another for wider acceptance and credibility. Whereas, in the former case, theoretical integration might involve piecing concepts from each theory together to develop a more elaborate framework, integration in the latter case, might involve testing competing propositions from each theory in order to arrive at a more refined framework. Therefore, in order to more effectively draw upon both CHAT and SDT when investigating learner engagement within the context of the current research project, it is necessary to begin by comparing their epistemological underpinnings.

#### **3.2.1 The dialectical logic and the “socio-spatial” dimension of engagement**

In Section 2.3.5, it was pointed out that while the SDT approach to engagement in learning assumes that the nutriments relevant to the individual learner’s psychological needs are universal, the CHAT approach focuses upon engagement as a socially-situated phenomenon and is interested in joint-interactions occurring within particular cultural spheres. At first glance, such dichotomies, (i.e., between the universal and particular, and between the individual and group), appear to set a wide gap between SDT and CHAT perspectives. However, such stark contrasts may simply serve to drive a wedge between the conceptual contents of these theories at the expense of a deeper consideration of their developmental dynamics. In fact, it is worth noting that in its emphasis on activity as a unit of life or



experience in which human beings engage to satisfy needs, CHAT too embodies a universalist logic. Indeed, as Kramer (2013) points out, according to CHAT, learners and teachers find themselves negotiating between what they perceive as their own individual needs and other societal demands. In other words, from a CHAT perspective, societal demands and basic psychological needs are considered to be two different manifestations of need at play over the course of an activity. In this way, a dialectical alternative is offered in the place of approaches which focus upon either the group or the individual as being sufficient for an effective analysis of learner engagement (Göncü, & Gauvain, 2012; Holzman, 2006; Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999).

SDT embodies a similar dialectical logic by assuming not only that people are active organisms with evolved tendencies toward making meaning from their experiences; but also by maintaining that this process requires ongoing social nutrients and environmental supports (Ryan & Niemiec, 2009). In other words, SDT's understanding is not that environments directly control human behaviour, or that the process of human development is automatic, but rather that social contexts can either support or thwart humans' natural tendencies toward psychological growth (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Thus, much like the CHAT perspective, it is a dialectic between the active organism and the social context that is the basis for assertions about human behaviour, experience, and development. In this way, there is room for both an account of the collective as well as the individual within CHAT and SDT, and so the epistemological gap between them is not as wide as one might initially anticipate.

In fact, common ground between SDT and CHAT is especially apparent when considered with respect to the more "linear-temporal" emphases within other perspectives on educational engagement. For example, the focus within phenomenological perspectives is upon the immediacy of the learning experience and in the participation-identification model, it is on longer-term cycles of educational development. Although these perspectives concentrate upon actions that occur across different time spans, the assumption, nevertheless, is that these actions follow one after the other and lead towards some sort of end of conclusion (Engeström, 2008). In contrast, SDT's emphasis on the way in which different learning environments can vary in terms of how successful they are in fulfilling basic psychological needs and CHAT's focus on patterns of joint-participation between learners across cultures means that they can be considered as united in terms of their relative emphasis upon what Engeström (2008, p. 258) terms the "socio-spatial" dimensions of engagement. This means

that within both theoretical perspectives and their associated empirical work we find an emphasis upon aggregations of actions, interactions and attitudes within a specific socio-spatial location<sup>6</sup>. Given this more socio-spatial orientation, it is argued that the CHAT and SDT perspectives are best distinguished from each other on the basis of whether the various environmental facets of engagement they consider are more proximal to or distal from the individual learner. So while in the SDT tradition, the basic psychological needs are considered as residing within the individual with school contexts influencing engagement by either supporting or undermining the fundamental psychological needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy, from a CHAT perspective, the individual's needs may also be influenced by more distal societal demands. In other words, while an individual's perception of his or her needs may be subjective, particular, and pertaining exclusively to himself or herself; an individual's needs may also be viewed as inseparable from the needs of others. So for example, as Kramer (2013) points out, teachers may experience a tension between attempting to foster a sense of competence, relatedness and autonomy amongst individual students, while also attempting to meet the wider societal demands placed on schools (e.g., meeting parental and governmental expectations with regard to initiating young people into an institutional culture, training students to take up future roles in society and supporting the formation of their unique characteristics and personalities).

### **3.2.2 Integrating CHAT and SDT – Challenges and Opportunities**

There is no simple way to resolve epistemological differences between theories which place different emphases upon the role of the individual and socio-cultural influences when accounting for learner engagement. This is because while socio-cultural phenomena exert a strong influence upon the thoughts, feelings and behaviours of individuals; it is also true that the individual still retains the ability to co-operate, comply, resist, deny, or even transcend the influence of their socio-cultural context. As a consequence, Kramer (2013) argues that viewing both the SDT and CHAT perspectives together has the potential to provide for a more holistic analysis because their relative strengths in theorising different manifestations of psychological need helps to focus our attention upon the position of the individual as negotiating between their own basic needs and various other societal demands. Therefore,

---

<sup>6</sup> It is important to remember that the different spatial and temporal logics underlying approaches to engagement are not considered in this analysis as concrete, inherent properties of those theories but rather they are considered as tendencies which can be discerned upon their juxtaposition.

for the purposes of the current research, it is argued that an effective integrative analytic approach lies not upon a reconciliation of contradictory positions or the testing of competing theoretical emphases. Rather, a more fruitful approach lies in an analysis which seeks to preserve the specificity, depth and underlying assumptions of each perspective in order to draw upon their strengths while offsetting their limitations.

Regarding limitations, it is important to note that the theoretical and empirical treatment of the role of the individual in SDT is not without controversy. For example, while Connell and Wellborn (1991) are explicit in pointing out that the role of context in their analysis proceeds not from the social to the individual, but rather from the individual to the social, Reeve (2012) argues that the linear logic embedded within their self-system model (whereby a teacher presents a learning activity to students, they then more or less engage themselves in the activity which, in turn, gives rise to learning in proportion to engagement levels) serves to downplay students' agentic involvement in the learning process. According to Reeve, students do not only react to learning activities, they also pro-act on them—transforming, modifying and personalising them.

With Reeve's critique we see the beginnings of a convergence with CHAT perspectives since human agency here is considered as a fundamental human characteristic that emerges through social and material interaction. In fact, the notion of agency has been placed at the centre of numerous CHAT analyses. For example, Edwards and D'Arcy (2004) have argued that school should support and develop what they call "relational agency," which they define as a capacity for recognizing and using the support of others, as well as be able to respond to the need for support from others. Elsewhere, Lave and Wenger (1991) have characterized agency as a process which emerges gradually as the student participates in his/her learning community and gains understanding, experience, and knowledge of its practices as well as responsibility for the community and access to power. For others such as Rainio (2008) agency is not only understood as something which emerges from harmonious participation within a community, but also through acts of resistance or defiance which result in positive change. It is argued that since a more extensive critical consideration of the role of human agency in learning activities has emerged within the CHAT perspective, it provides a fruitful means of addressing Reeve's concerns over the neglect of this concept within SDT.

Notwithstanding this area of relative strength, it is important to remember that CHAT approaches are still critiqued for running the risk of an underestimation of the extent to which individual-level cognitive, affective and behavioural processes influence engagement in learning activity. Because SDT has developed a burgeoning programme of research in the latter regard, and has generated fairly consistent evidence that there is an association between the perceived satisfaction of students' needs and various indicators of their emotional and behavioural engagement, it provides useful insights into why certain interpersonal factors within school environments promote student engagement while others undermine it. As a result, it is well placed to explore differences in how individuals and groups respond to opportunities afforded by their educational contexts as well as in the consideration of the process by which students and teachers construct meanings in relation to educational practice.

### **3.2.3 Mode of Integration: Triangulation**

Triangulation is employed as the principal methodological strategy to develop a more integrated view on learner engagement by using a range of conceptual tools which have emerged within the CHAT and SDT research programmes. Initially, many researchers in the social sciences used triangulation as a validation strategy in which multiple lenses are brought to bear on the same set of data in order to compare results. From this perspective, it is argued that if the findings are corroborated across different approaches then greater confidence can be held in the singular conclusion, whereas if the findings conflict, then the researcher can modify interpretations and conclusions accordingly (see Wiersma, 2000). However, others have argued that the goal of triangulating perspectives is not necessarily a search for corroboration, but rather to expand our understanding of social and psychological phenomena (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). As Fielding and Fielding (1986) maintain, since theories are generally the product of quite different traditions, when they are combined, one may get a fuller picture, especially since different methods have emerged as a product of these different theoretical traditions. Thus, combining perspectives can add range and depth, but not necessarily accuracy.

Indeed, as Kincheloe (2007) points out, since any single research perspective is necessarily laden with assumptions, blindneses, and limitations; to avoid one-sided reductionism, researchers must learn a variety of ways of seeing and interpreting in the pursuit of

knowledge. Thus, it is concluded that the more perspectival variety a researcher employs, the more dimensions and consequences of an issue will be illuminated and the more robust explanations of these issues will be (Nash, 2002; Kelle, 2001; Boaler, 1997; Hartnoll, 1991). It is in the spirit of this later perspective on triangulation that the current research is designed and conducted. It is argued that by considering different perspectives on engagement and incorporating data generated using multiple methods, our prospects are enhanced for the broadening as well as deepening our understanding of the interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics underlying pupil engagement (Wosnitza & Beltman, 2012). Drawing upon multiple perspectives also challenges the researcher to look beyond obvious explanations of data as well as preventing the premature acceptance of overly simplistic explanations for certain findings (Thurmond, 2001).

Although a strategy of triangulation intends to guide the research design towards the development of a more holistic and comprehensive view of learner engagement by bringing together a wider array of social and psychological considerations into the analysis, it nevertheless represents a departure from the most common mode of integration in the psychology of engagement research: the development of the composite models of engagement. As we have seen in Section 2.3.5, composite models of engagement are typically developed via a process of statistical analysis using large samples of questionnaire data in order to integrate a range of different dimensions of school engagement (e.g., behavioural, cognitive, affective etc.) within a single framework. However, as was also pointed out in this section, practical research demands (e.g., research time-scales, availability of certain kinds of data) and the inherent difficulty of reconciling different levels of explanation within an operationalised research framework, have often meant that researchers have had to sacrifice certain aspects of the theories in question (e.g., developmental dynamics, specific factors and/or predictions) in order to forge a workable research solution. Overall, then, while some accounts of learner engagement processes strive to integrate different theoretical perspectives, very few accounts explicitly aim to retain the core philosophical foundations of the approaches they are drawing upon. It is argued that by retaining the distinction between SDT and CHAT approaches to engagement on the basis of the different emphases they place on the role of the individual and the socio-cultural domain provides us with an alternative way of advancing more holistic understandings of engagement beyond the dominant trend towards integrating a host of different factors on dimensions of engagement within a single analysis of questionnaire data.

However, as an integrating strategy, triangulation comes with a certain set of risks. As Banik (1993) points out, if the intended analytical framework is not initially identified, or if concepts within theoretical frameworks are not adequately defined, then attempts at triangulation can cause confusion. According to Yin (2003), while the ability to conduct cross comparisons between data and theoretical perspectives helps to better illuminate the case, there is a risk that the global issues that the researcher initially set out to address could become subsumed by the details of the analysis at the individual sub-unit level. Yin (2003) suggests that in order to counter this, one important practice during the analysis phase of any case study is the return to the propositions, as this practice helps to ensure that the data are converged in an attempt to understand the overall case, not simply the various parts of the case, or the contributing factors that influence the case. Consequently, the main propositions underlying both the SDT and CHAT perspectives on engagement are outlined in Figure 3.1. This propositional framework will be used to guide critical comparisons and contrasts to be drawn between these theoretical perspectives at a more global analytical level.

**Table 3.1***Key Propositions on Learner Engagement in SDT and CHAT*

Theoretical Perspective	Key Propositions
SDT	<p>From their educational experiences, individual students cumulatively construct views of themselves which in turn, shape their perceptions of school and guide their future actions</p> <p>School contexts influence engagement by either supporting or undermining learners basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness</p>
CHAT	<p>Learners and teachers find themselves negotiating between what they perceive as their own individual needs and what they perceive as societal demands</p> <p>Understandings of young peoples' engagement in education are culturally embedded and vary across different educational contexts and sets of inter-personal relations</p>

Since both of the SDT and CHAT theoretical perspectives contribute a range of conceptual tools for investigating pupil engagement, there is a need for a certain level of understanding and coordination between these diverse approaches to the psychological study of student engagement. Consequently, this chapter will now turn to elaborating on how these conceptual tools have been combined for the purposes of the current research.

**3.3 Research Design: A multi-methods case study**

The context for this study is the experiences of KS3 students in Year 9 when participating on a visual arts programme which was delivered at a short-stay school in the North-West of England between January and July 2014. The current research adopted a mixed-methods,

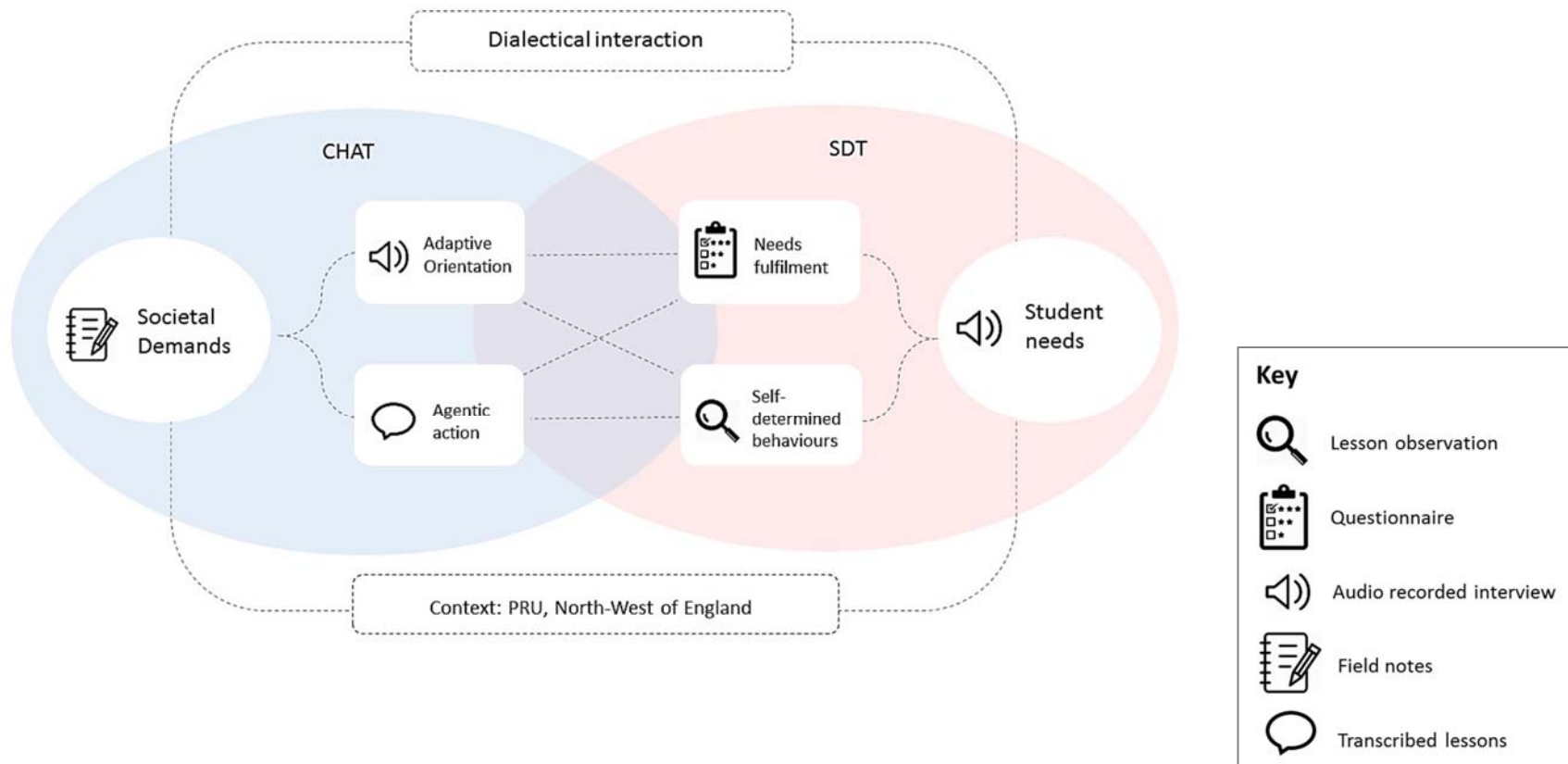
single case study design, as this approach facilitates the exploration of learner engagement within its context using a variety of data sources. Data was gathered using a variety of different methods (i.e., questionnaires, classroom observations and interviews) which were treated as distinct units of analysis and were embedded within each theoretical approach to engagement. This approach ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses thus allowing for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. Indeed, advocates of triangulation such as Kelle (2001) emphasise the necessity of using mixed methods to understand phenomena which operate on both a collective and individual level since one method alone cannot offer a sufficient basis for explanation. Consequently, Kelle (2001) urges a reclaiming of the original cartographic meaning of triangulation wherein an accurate identification of a position requires at least two measures taken from sightings at multiple known points. Therefore, the overall approach to the present case study is holistic in the sense that the inter and intra-personal areas of interest are embedded as distinct units of analysis within a broader contextual analysis, thus allowing data to be analysed within each sub-unit separately and then findings compared between and across all subunits. The embedded units of analysis and their corresponding research methods are represented diagrammatically in Figure 3.1.

Yin (2003) notes that a case study does not necessarily imply that only a single case is pursued as the incorporation of multiple cases into an analysis afford researchers the power to compare data and consider theories across a range of different settings. Nevertheless, while a multiple case study design allows for a wider exploration of the issues of concern across a variety of contexts, as Baxter and Jack (2008) point out, this approach can be enormously time-consuming if the comparisons the researcher makes between cases are to be equally precise and comprehensive. In addition, as Eisenhardt (1991) outlines, of ultimate concern is not whether two cases are better than one or four better than three, but rather, how much is already known about the case setting by the researcher and how much new information is likely to be obtained from a particular case. Therefore, a key consideration when deciding between whether to pursue a single or multiple case analysis for the present research was whether the researcher was capable of gaining an in-depth understanding of the case setting(s) and collecting meaningful data within the proposed time-scale for the research. Therefore, because prior to conducting the present PhD study, the researcher had no pre-existing experience of working in or visiting Pupil Referral Units, a single case study design was pursued in order to permit a more careful, in-depth application of multiple research



methods in a relatively unfamiliar context with view to ensuring that sufficient time was allowed for the provision of a more nuanced, empirically-rich and holistic account. Nevertheless, because the present case study has embedded specific units of analysis within an overarching analytical framework, it is argued that the present design opens up possibilities for future cross-case analyses should such opportunities arise.

Figure 3.1:  
*The Research Design*



### **3.3.1 Contextual level of Inquiry**

The current research endeavoured to move beyond an approach which treats the context for the case study as simply an isolated backdrop for the occurrence of the particular phenomena in which one is interested. Rather, the aim for this level of analysis is to consider the context as something which is both internal to participants as it is influenced by their own particular objectives, perspectives and goals; but at the same time, as something that is external to participants since it also constitutes the artefacts, institutions, rules and procedures surrounding them as they act within their own particular learning environments. In this way, the common epistemological ground that lies between CHAT and SDT theorists, in their assumption of a dialectical relationship between the individual and their society, is retained in the outer, contextual, layer of the analytical framework.

When adopting an SDT perspective, the analysis of the case study context was focused on the participants' perceptions of their school environment, especially in relation to the extent to which it was perceived as either supporting or undermining their basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness. The primary issues to be addressed from this perspective, then, were the participating students' sense of relatedness to their teachers and peers; students' beliefs about the extent to which they believe they can achieve success and avoid failure at school; and whether the participants engage in activities because they feel pressured or because they desire understanding and enjoy the task (Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008).

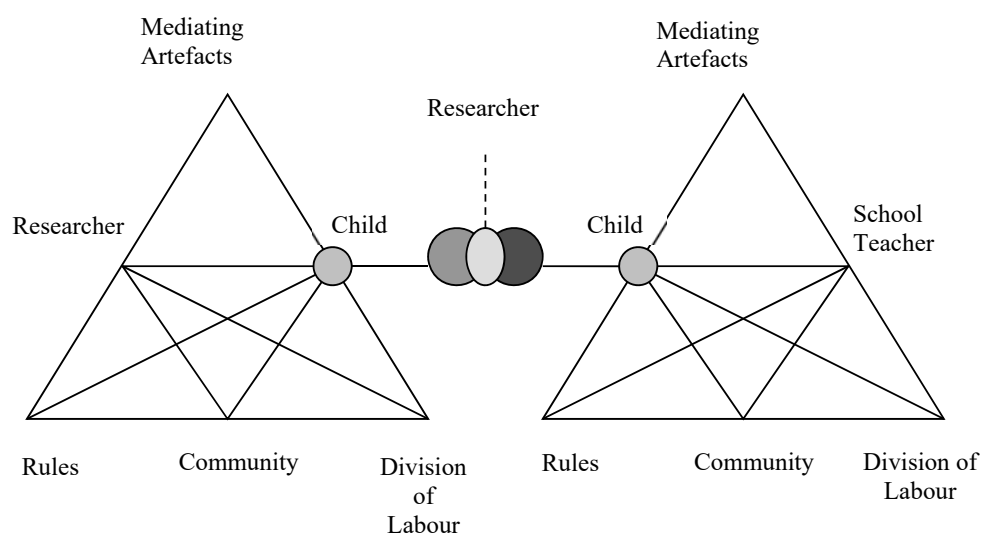
When adopting the CHAT perspective, however, the inquiry moved towards identifying culturally embedded understandings of learner engagement amongst different stakeholders (i.e. teachers, students, management) in the particular school context in question, and a consideration of the extent to which such understandings are shared or contested between these different groups. The analysis also sought to investigate whether there were any contradictions between what teachers and learners perceive as their individual needs and the wider societal and institutional demands placed upon them. Engeström's (2001) framework for the analysis of activity systems provides a useful framework to guide the analysis. This is because, according to Engeström, the development of activity theory should comprise of a model whereby researchers, participants and their environment cease to be treated as separate entities and the activities of individuals should be considered amongst a

much wider range of collective and communal factors. These factors include the “rules” which either constrain or allow activities to occur, the “communities” to which the participants belong and the “division of labour” between community members while the activity is in progress. Also considered are “mediating artefacts” which are used during the activity (this includes the language and tools used by actors) as well as the aims and goals the actors hold for that activity.

The framework depicted in Figure 3.2 was used to guide the contextual level of the current inquiry. As Figure 3.2 demonstrates, it comprises of two interacting activity systems which might have a bearing upon participants – the educational approaches adopted in the visual arts programme and those approaches which are typically adopted by the school in other lessons and activities. Figure 3.2 also depicts a very simple joining of these two activity systems with the activity system on the right representing the general educational context of the participating school and the activity system of the left representing the educational context of the implemented art programme. Thus, whilst the factors within each system may be different, they are nevertheless linked.

**Figure 3.2**

*Activity Systems Analysis*



Activity theory, however, does not offer a precise way to analyse the mediational artefacts under investigation in the present study. Therefore, in order to bring more structure to this phase of the analysis, I will draw upon the work of Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) who have clearly elaborated six steps for the analysis of instructional activity systems as well as a whole series of sub-steps that make up each stage. To briefly summarise Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy, the first stage of the analytical process involves clarifying, comparing and reflecting upon the motivations and goals within the activity systems where learning encounters occur. Following this, the analysis turns to providing an in-depth definition and examination of each of the components of the given activity systems, namely, the learners, teachers, community, rules, and division of labour. The next key step involved is a decomposition of individual and cooperative actions during a learning encounter, as well as an analysis of the chains of operations between the various sets actors involved. It is then necessary to examine the role that persistent structures, such as artefacts, institutions and cultural values had, and continue to have, in shaping learning encounters. The final steps involved at this stage of the analysis then, are to step back from the data to consider how the various components that make up the activity system affect each other.

By adopting a more fine-grained and systematic approach to the analysis of the case study context, it is argued that the production and analysis of the foregoing data offers prospects

for more effectively comparing, reconfiguring and generating new ways of thinking about engagement in education as well as the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive conceptualisation of the context surrounding learning processes (Wosnitza, & Beltman, 2012; Holzman, 2006). It is also argued that the foregoing process permits the research to more effectively capture the processes involved in organizational developments and changes as well as identify the contradictions and tensions that shape developments in particular educational settings (Yamagata-Lynch, 2007). In addition, it is widely regarded that using a more open-ended approaches like that proposed by Engeström, yields thicker descriptions of contextual influences which contain an inherent “richness and holism, with a strong potential for revealing complexity” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Thus, the incorporation of broader array of contextual data has the capacity to enrich the overall analyses as well as expand its explanatory power.

### **3.3.2 Intra- and Inter-personal Analysis**

However, when we move from a more theoretical orientation towards the application of analytical strategies, the approach to integration needs to become more pragmatic. In other words, the various conceptual tools which were located within the literature need to be pieced together, in an analytical framework where the goal is to generate a range of representations of the data in order to enable us to describe and make sense of what happened over the course of the art initiative. This strategy, otherwise known as an act of “bricolage” (see Lincoln & Denzin, 2003) provides the researcher with the opportunity to explore learner engagement upon a more open, expansive analytical terrain, as the research data can be interpreted and reinterpreted across different conceptual frames.

The design for the present research includes two sub-units of analysis for the CHAT perspective and two sub-units of analysis for the SDT perspective. As mentioned in the opening of this Chapter, research data was generated using a mixture of research methods including interviews, questionnaires, field notes and classroom observations. The data corresponding to each theoretical perspective was balanced across the entire research period so as to minimize the burden to participants due to fatigue arising from responding to multiple research questions. For the self-determination theory perspective, the sub-units which were investigated included the participating students’ quantitative evaluations of their learning environments and a systematic observation of their teachers’ instructional

practices and learners behavioural responses during lessons. For the CHAT perspective, the sub-units which were investigated included the participating students' adaptive orientations to school and classroom activities and their patterns of agency during lessons.

*Table 3.2*

*Units of Analysis*

Adaptive Orientation	Participants' perceptions of what is needed for the creation of favourable conditions for the achievement their own personal aims in school activities (Zarakovsky, 2014). This includes an orientation to the execution of the actions that have already been proved expedient on the basis of previous (individual or generic) experience, but includes when a person might not foresee what kind of substantive effect his/her action will lead to and, nevertheless, act adaptively.
Participative Agency	The concept of agency implies an active student, one who makes plans, and carries out actions. Three forms of agency which form the basis of the present analysis: (a) agency as self-change and as transforming the objective of an of an activity; (b) agency as becoming a responsible and intentional member of a learning group or a classroom and thus a member of a society; and (c) agency as resistance and transforming dominant power relations.
Basic Psychological Needs	Students possess three fundamental psychological needs which are based in physiology and are evolutionarily adaptive. Relatedness refers to the need to experience oneself as connected to other people, competence refers to the need to experience oneself as effective in one's interactions with the physical and social environment, and autonomy refers to the need to express one's authentic self and to experience the self as the source of one's own actions.

---

Self-determined behaviour	Volitional actions that enable a student to act as the primary causal agent in his/her school life and to maintain or improve the quality of their learning. Students perform activities effectively and relate positively with the people in their immediate school environment
------------------------------	--

---

### 3.4 Field Procedures

#### 3.4.1 Recruitment of participants

It is argued that maximising the chances of a positive programme outcome in the context of alternative provision is not as simple as selecting the key demographic characteristics of a population (e.g., age, sex, race, socio-economic status) and recruiting participants purely upon this basis. This is because the planned educational programme required sustained rather than once-off contact between the participants and the researcher; thus being more highly dependent upon mutual feelings of cooperation, respect and trust between both parties. Indeed, as a social and cultural product, the current research project was no doubt shaped by many bureaucratic controls which lay outside the individual researcher's control. For example, schools must operate in accordance with many health and safety policies and curriculum obligations which undoubtedly shape their willingness to partake in research. In fact, researchers have noted that the implementation of educational interventions is often unsuccessful when there is insufficient understanding of the particular ecology of the school environments. For example, in a U.S. study which used multi-level modelling, Gregory, Henry and Schoeny (2007) found that teacher-reported support between staff and among teachers and students predicted higher average levels of effective programme implementations. Consequently, the recruitment of participants for the current research was the result of a purposive sampling process and based upon a negotiation process between the researcher and various practitioners working with young people in a PRU based in the North West of England.



Purposive sampling is often used when small numbers of individuals are studied using intense, focused methods which result in the generation of large amounts of valuable data which are often obtained via a free-flowing communication processes. In addition, a purposive sampling strategy was adopted because the proposed study does not seek statistical generalizability but rather, aims to obtain enough information to generate conceptual categories in order to formulate a theoretical position (Robson & McCartan, 2016). As a result, the selection of the school and participants for the proposed study was based upon the following practical considerations:

1. Willingness and ability of students to participate in the art initiative and to respond to questionnaires, interview questions etc.
2. Willingness and ability of staff to facilitate and assist with the implementation of the educational programme and the collection of data.
3. Level of support available in the organisational environment, ability to develop rapport with staff and pupils and quality of interpersonal relations in the organisation.
4. Practical and logistical issues such as transport, resources, parental permission, scheduling etc.

A further key consideration, when approaching alternative providers in the region was the particular characteristics of the sub-groups of pupils which have been identified in policy and the academic literature as representing either *unique cases* in the investigation of disengagement and exclusion from school (e.g., girls), *critical cases* in terms of their developmental stage (e.g., students aged 11-12) or more *representative cases* in terms of their demographic probability of becoming excluded from school. According to national statistics, those at a higher risk of exclusion include boys, boys of Afro-Caribbean origin, members of the travelling community, pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils with Special Educational needs (for details on pupil exclusions in England see Cotzias, 2014).

The final core participating group was largely reflective of national trends in school exclusion whereby the group consisted of only one female but the remainder were all male, aged between 12 and 14. All participants were white British and resided in a local town where, according to DfE school comparison statistics (DfE, 2016), the percentage of children eligible for free school meals in state secondary schools in this town is approximately

twice the national average. Thus, the participating group were reflective of national averages in terms of the gender composition of the group and their eligibility for free school meals. In terms of ethnicity, however, it is worth noting that exclusions of pupils of Afro-Caribbean origin tend to be regionally concentrated, with the overwhelming majority of exclusions taking place in the London and West-Midlands regions (e.g. 85% of all permanent exclusions of pupils from this ethnic group in England took place in these regions the 2012-2013 school year). Consequently, the ethnic composition of the group is broadly reflective of that of the North-West region where 81% of permanent exclusions and 88% of fixed-period exclusions issued in the 2012-2013 school year were to white British pupils. From a different perspective, the participants taking part in the current study represent a unique case in terms of being amongst a very small minority of pupils in the region whom have been excluded from school and/or referred to a PRU. For example, in the 2012-2013 school year in England, 0.12% of secondary school students in state-funded schools received a permanent exclusion, 2.8% of secondary school students in state-funded schools received fixed period exclusions of 6 or more days and less than 1% of state-funded secondary school pupils attended a PRU (DfE, 2013).

### **3.4.2 Preliminary Fieldwork**

In October 2012, contact was made with a school in the North-West of England which specialised in providing alternative and complementary education for Year 7-11 pupils who have been referred from mainstream schools in the local region. Preliminary meetings to discuss the aims of the project were organised and held with the school principal, vice-principal, art teacher and Year 7 teaching assistant. Having experienced positive working relations with researchers from Edge Hill in the past, the school management team was particularly receptive to participating in the project. Consequently, a series of preliminary weekly school visits to assist teaching assistants in the delivery of art sessions to Year Seven pupils began in January 2013. This exploratory phase allowed further insights to be gained with respect to the rhythms of everyday school life as well as a further appreciation of practical issues which need to be considered before embarking on any empirical research.

After this initial contact was made with the school and preliminary visits to the Year 7 art sessions commenced, a series of further meetings took place to consider how best to develop and deliver an art programme over the course of the 2013-2014 school year and it was

initially decided that this programme was to be co-delivered by the researcher and the school's nurture group leader, Val (pseudonym). In addition, the research team made contact with the vice-principal, in order to propose the possibility of hosting an undergraduate psychology student to assist with the project as part of a university placement programme. This idea was well-received by the school and consequently, and when the programme commenced, the researcher received help from an undergraduate student to set up art activities for the pupils as well as with some of the logistical aspects of data collection (e.g., distribution of questionnaires).

Upon receipt of ethical approval of the PhD research from the university, a series of meetings were arranged with teaching staff and the school principal in order to schedule approaches to recruiting pupils as well as times and dates for delivering the art programme. In addition, a budget containing estimated costs for the research (this included items such as: art materials, travel costs, entrance fees for attractions, and small non-monetary gifts to act as tokens of appreciation for participating pupils) was submitted to the head of department for approval. Once this budget had been approved by the head of department, regular visits to the recently-installed nurture room to observe and help facilitate art sessions with Val. This recent school initiative involved the development of an attractive, homely classroom space in a separate out-building next to the school's playing fields. As part of her role here, Val worked in collaboration with a number of other staff to provide a variety of experiences, opportunities, approaches and resources to address the needs of participating pupils within a culture of trust, respect and understanding. From the initial visits to the nurture room and meetings with staff, it became apparent that the pupils being referred to the nurture group were those with some of the most severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Indeed, the pupils attending during the initial weeks of the nurture programme, had not been in mainstream school for a number of years and had deeply ingrained patterns of non-attendance which were ongoing, even during nurture group time. As a result of these issues, it became very difficult to envisage how we could organise a sequence of more structured art sessions and field trips for such pupils. It became apparent that attending to logistical matters such as obtaining parental consent forms from pupils, pre-booking transport and providing group numbers to venues would not be feasible in light of the instability of the pupils' attendance patterns and, in some cases, home life.

By mid-November, it emerged that Val (who had been the key collaborator with the research project to this point), would no longer be continuing her work in the nurture room. The type of work that was taking place in the nurture room had evolved in a different direction to that which she had initially envisaged (e.g., anger management worksheets, mathematics and English ability assessments) therefore she wished to continue working in her area of expertise (the visual arts) by assisting with the lessons in the school's art room. Given the barriers identified with implementing an art programme in the context of the pupils attending the nurture group, I decided to continue my preliminary field work alongside my existing collaborator and her colleagues in the context of the art room. Thus, between mid-November, 2013 and late January, 2014, a total of nine half-day visits were made to the school's art room as pupils in Years 8 and 9 continued work on pre-existing art projects in their weekly art session. Spending more extended periods of time in the school observing and interacting with pupils as they participated in the various facets of their school lives - from the morning "community time" programme which seeks to ensure that they are provided with a nourishing breakfast, to the two-hour morning and afternoon lessons, mid-morning break time and mid-day taxi pick-ups to return small groups of pupils home - permitted a deeper understanding of the practical and methodological issues which would potentially impact upon the effective delivery of the research art programme.

Beyond the ongoing pressing challenge of attempting to identify and recruit pupils who had more stable relations with the school for the research project, it also became apparent that many of the research instruments which had been specifically selected for the research study were not presented in a format that would be suitable or appealing for many of the pupils attending the centre since many presented with reading difficulties, limited concentration spans or were deeply resistant to doing any paper-based tasks that resembled the work that they were typically required to do by their teachers in school. As a result, in late November, work began on adapting the SDT pupil questionnaire in order to transform it into format which would be more inviting for pupils. An illustrated in Figure 3.3, a flashcard version of the questionnaire was created and piloted as a card-sorting exercise with a number of Year 9 art pupils from mid-December, 2013 to early January, 2014. The more visual aesthetic and kinesthetic nature of the card sorting task generated positive feedback from participating pupils, therefore, the newly adapted version of the questionnaire was incorporated into the research programme in place of the original, more conventional version of the questionnaire.

**Figure 3.3**

*Adapted Flashcard Activity for SDT Questionnaire Items*



In late January, a meeting was scheduled with Tim (pseudonym), the school's acting principal, in order to seek out a group of pupils that could participate in an art programme on a regular basis over the coming months. Tim suggested that a group of Year 8 pupils had recently been formed and that these pupils were due to stay with their teacher (hereby referred to with the pseudonym "Greg") for the foreseeable future, thus it was advised that I liaise with Greg in order to organise and implement the art programme around the group's existing class schedule. Following the vice-principal's recommendations, a meeting was organised with Greg in which he outlined the issues that would need to be considered when planning the delivery of the art programme. According to Greg, the pupils comprising the KS 3 group were some of the most challenging pupils he had encountered over the course of his nine-year career at the school. Issues such as continuous shouting, aggressive behaviour, verbal abuse of pupils and staff, ongoing resistance to school projects, classroom activities and school rules; made for a particularly stressful classroom environment which Greg felt was severely impacting upon his ability to manage the group and help them successfully meet learning goals for the lessons. With these behavioural issues in mind, Greg emphasized the

importance of taking a tentative approach to the co-ordination of the art programme, tailoring the activities involved in each session with respect to the highly volatile group dynamics he was currently attempting to manage.

### **3.4.3 Implementation of Initiative**

From late January onwards, then, a series of art sessions were planned in collaboration with Greg and delivered on a weekly basis during sessions which last approximately two hours. The content and activities comprising these sessions were developed around a number of themes (for example, “Climate change”, “The Arctic”, “Underwater worlds”, “Brazil”) that Greg had been working on with the group in other lessons such as English and Geography. Given the behavioural issues which the group presented, as per Greg’s suggestions, a more emergent approach to session-planning was adopted whereby the development of more harmonious classroom relations was sought before field trips commenced in order to minimise the potential for any major incidents to occur (e.g., pupils absconding) whilst visiting attractions away from the school premises. This also gave the teaching team the opportunity to gain further insights into the pupils’ interests so that activities and field trips could be based around their intrinsic motivations. Thus, building upon enthusiasm for animals amongst most members of a group – an enthusiasm which stems from hobbies such as fishing, career goals such as veterinary practice and the prominence of family pets in their home lives – the art programme explored art works and pursued field trips around different facets of the general guiding theme of the animal world.

From January 2014, a total of 18 sessions were facilitated where pupils took part in a variety of different educational activities including the following: viewing and discussing various pieces of contemporary art, experimenting with various art media and techniques, participating in several interactive games and activities, accompanying staff on a number of nature walks in the local area, visiting the nearby contemporary arts and crafts gallery to view works and to create collages with a local professional illustrator and using chalks to create a large outdoor wall mural. In order to provide activities that would appeal to the pupils' expressed interest in wildlife, the KS3 group also took part in an interactive animal handling session with a specialist education officer at a local zoo where they also embarked upon a photographic exploration of the animals and zoo environment. They also visited a large aquarium to view various exhibits and interactive displays of sharks, fish and reptiles

from large underwater tunnels, underwater windows and rock pools (see Figure 3.4 for photographic documentation of this excursion and associated art activities). They also participated in a session with a professional artist where they created fish-head masks inspired by the ceremonial activities of the Kayapo tribespeople of Brazil.

Figure 3.4

*Photographic exploration of aquarium and associated arts-based activities*



#### **3.4.4 Ethical Considerations**

The use of case-study research methods with groups of young people brought the research project into the realms of the development of sensitive relationships which are bound by strict ethical principles. All research procedures were conducted in compliance with the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Code of Ethics which is based upon the following four key ethical principles which constitute the main domains within which ethical issues are

considered: respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons, professional competence, responsibility for maximizing the social benefits of research and minimizing all potential forms of harm to participants, and maintaining the scientific integrity of psychological research (BPS, 2009). The BPS Ethics Committee has published detailed ethical guidelines and a code of conduct which all psychology researchers are expected to abide by. In order to elaborate upon the particulars of this code and how it informed the decision-making process and overall design of the research, the ethical issues contained within the code which are most pertinent to the anticipated modes of enquiry within the current research are outlined in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3**

*Key Ethical Considerations*

BPS Guideline	Ethical standard for the current research
<p>1.2 Standard of privacy and confidentiality. Psychologists should:</p> <p>(i) Keep appropriate records.</p> <p>(ii) Normally obtain the consent of clients who are considered legally competent or their duly authorised representatives, for disclosure of confidential information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obtain informed consent from all research participants also seek parental permission via participating school/organisation</li> <li>- Make audio, video or photographic recordings of participants only with the explicit permission of participants</li> <li>- Anonymize school and research participants when reporting findings by using pseudonyms</li> <li>- Devise a personal ethical code to facilitate the creation of field notes, reflective journals and data collection instruments which refrain from including names and identifying details of participants (See Appendix A).</li> <li>- Store all paper-based research data in a locked cabinet.</li> <li>- Safely destroy all confidential information at the conclusion of the research. As all information containing identifying details are paper-based, these shall be physically destroyed within a maximum of 5 years of PhD completion.</li> <li>- Seek supplemental informed consent, consult with supervisory team and participating school/organisation when there is significant change in the nature or focus of activities.</li> </ul>



### 1.3 Standard of informed consent

Psychologists should:

- (iii) Ensure that clients, particularly children and vulnerable adults, are given ample opportunity to understand the nature, purpose, and anticipated consequences of any professional services or research participation, so that they may give informed consent to the extent that their capabilities allow.
- (iv) Practice within the boundaries of their competence.

- Ensure from the first contact that clients are aware of their right to withdraw at any time from research participation.
- Hold an introductory programme session with participants to provide more information on nature of the research and the educational programme
- Build review/feedback opportunities at regular intervals during the arts-based programme to allow/encourage participants to express their views on the activities and delivery of the curriculum.
- Remind participants at beginning and end of each round of data collection that they can withdraw any information they give to four weeks after it has been collected. shall be clarified with the participants and the participating organisation at the outset of all research activities.
- Engage in additional areas of professional activity only after obtaining the knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience necessary for competent functioning.

---

### 1.4 Standard of protection of research participants

Psychologists should:

- (i) Consider all research from the standpoint of participants, for the purpose of eliminating potential risks to psychological well-being, physical health, personal values, or dignity.
- (ii) Undertake such consideration with due concern for the potential effects of, e.g., age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, marital or family status, or sexual orientation, seeking consultation as needed from those knowledgeable about such effects.
- (iii) Ask about participants from the first contact about individual factors that might reasonably lead to risk of harm, and inform research participants of any action they should take to minimise such risks.
- (vii) Inform participants from the first contact that they may decline to answer any questions put to them, while conveying as well that this may lead to termination of

- Consult with participating organisation/school obtain advice, information, procedures and best practice on circumstances when participants could/should be advised to seek alternative sources of assistance.
  - As the proposed research will be conducted in partnership with the participating school/organisation (as opposed to being externally planned and implemented with minimal negotiation or dialogue with respect to the research plans), it is preferable to embark upon the ethical approval procedure at Edge Hill University with the cooperation of this school/organisation so as to incorporate any assistance and advice they may offer as well as to anticipate any further ethical issues which have not been anticipated to date.
  - Remind participants at beginning of interviews and questionnaires that they do not have to answer any questions which they find intrusive or upsetting.
-

---

their participation, particularly when safety issues are implicated.

ix) Exercise particular caution when responding to requests for advice from participants concerning psychological or other issues, and offer to make a referral for assistance if the inquiry appears to involve issues sufficiently serious to warrant professional services.

---

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has described the methodological framework for this study: a case study approach with embedded units of analysis which draw upon questionnaire, interview and observational data. It has been argued that the present research intends to work towards the development of more holistic and comprehensive view of learner engagement by bringing together a wider array of social and psychological considerations into the analysis. A rationale for the use of triangulation strategies, the pursuit of a contextual level of analysis and the incorporation of various SDT and CHAT conceptual tools, has been provided. In addition, this chapter has outlined the case study protocol which includes the procedures for the implementation of the art programme, the selection of the school and research participants and the data collection and analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Supporting Students at the Ashwick: An SDT and CHAT analysis of Staff Perspectives**

This chapter presents the findings of mixed-methods research carried out in the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) at the centre of this PhD thesis. It proceeds by outlining the procedures used to collect the interview and field work data that were used for the purpose of a series of analyses informed by both SDT and CHAT. Following an outline of the research methods which were employed in Section 4.2, the presentation of the findings in Section 4.3 begins by considering the basic institutional structure and everyday practices that take place at the “Ashwick centre”, i.e. the pseudonym which will be used throughout to denote the PRU where the present research was carried out. From here, the analysis continues with an SDT-informed exploration of staff perspectives on the institutional demands and expectations that surround their daily activities. Interview data obtained from five members of staff is examined for themes relating to support for students’ relatedness, autonomy and competence needs. Following this an activity systems analysis is conducted in which two central activities- the provision of respite and the facilitation of a reintegration back into mainstream school – are found to reside alongside each other, albeit in an uneasy co-existence. The findings from this investigation indicate that providing education for students at the Ashwick is a multidimensional issue that is intimately connected with issues of classroom conduct, student safety and wellbeing, the availability of school resources, staff expertise and the young person’s right to educational provision. This chapter will argue that the unstable nature of the Ashwick’s objectives raises serious concerns for how educational initiatives can be sustained over time so that practitioners can learn and develop upon their experiences

### **4.1 Introduction**

Like most educational initiatives, the art programme which was delivered as part of the current research does not represent a complete overhaul of the existing educational practice within the participating school, but rather, operates within the context of a series of long-standing school policies, procedures and practices. As a result, the outline of the research findings begins from the premise that any changes in the arena of student engagement that arise in the wake of programme participation, are likely to be complex. Indeed, the difficulties involved in attempting to implement pre-existing government policy on

alternative provision were outlined in Section 1.1.3 where it was argued that it is possible to trace a certain amount of uncertainty with respect to what counts as desirable educational practice within these settings. This is because guidance in policy reports range widely; from those emphasizing more personalized and flexible curriculum options, to those suggesting the value of a more vocational approach as well as those which stress the importance of a return to a more conventional, academic focus.

However, as Meo and Parker (2004) note, while the issues surrounding operational protocols of PRUs have been well rehearsed within the academic literature, many of these accounts lack practical considerations of how teachers within these settings experience, adapt and respond to national and local government policy as they attempt to fulfil their occupational roles and duties. This chapter aims to work towards addressing this gap in the literature by investigating the manner in which a group of teachers at the Ashwick perceive and orientate themselves towards their particular educational environment. By considering their perceptions of the institutional, social and environmental context surrounding their everyday classroom and art-programme experiences, the primary aim is to develop a more comprehensive psychological understanding of the dynamics underlying engagement in learning. Moreover, because, from both a CHAT and SDT perspective, the structure of this educational environment can do much to either impede or facilitate the effective delivery of educational initiatives, it is important to attend to the ways in which participants make sense of the institutional values, demands, and expectations that surround their daily activities. To this end, the following research questions will be addressed over the course of this chapter:

How does the Ashwick operate in practice?

What supports are available for students?

What challenges do the teachers face in their roles?

What are the implications of these findings for future research and practice?

## **4.2 Methods**

### **4.2.1 Field Notes**

A descriptive and reflective research journal was kept by the researcher for the duration of the school visits for the research project in order to build a collection of notes, observations, thoughts and other relevant materials to increase self-awareness, aid reflection and facilitate

further analysis from a CHAT perspective (Hubbs & Brand, 2005). A note-taking system was developed whereby quick, short-hand notes were taken immediately upon exiting the field and then more comprehensive and detailed notes were produced over a number of days following the school visit. This proved a particularly time-consuming process, however, the production of the short-hand version of field notes became an invaluable tool to aid recall and made the production of in-depth descriptions of the key events a more efficient process. Approximately 65,000 words were written to provide a detailed account of 26 site visits which were conducted over the course of the school year, for the purposes of the research.

It is argued that an analysis of this field data permitted the research to more effectively capture the processes involved in organizational developments and changes as well as to identify the contradictions and tensions that shape developments in educational settings (Yamagata-Lynch, 2007). This is because these more open-ended methods are specifically designed to assure the collection of idiographic forms of data (i.e., information that reflects individual/group variations as a function of cultural experiences and context/setting). Consequently, the researcher is enabled to consider various manifestations of unintended positive or negative outcomes that may not be captured by the more standard types of questions contained within particular research instruments (e.g., SDT questionnaires).

#### **4.2.2 Interviews**

Individual semi-structured interviews were held with five teachers at the Ashwick in the summer term of 2014 in order to explore their views about teaching, learning and the art project. As per BPS and Edge Hill University ethical guidelines; participation in interviews were completely voluntary and required informed consent from participants. The staff sample included three teaching assistants, one Key Stage 3 teacher and a local freelance artist who provided art sessions at the school. The participants for these interviews were selected on the basis of having worked most closely with the researcher when implementing the art initiative over the course of the 2014 school year. While a schedule of questions was developed to guide the interview process (see Appendix B), a more open-ended interviewing format was also adopted to allow the researcher to tailor questions according to the circumstances of the particular participant being interviewed, thus capitalizing on the more detailed knowledge of the research context which had been gained by spending extended

periods of time in the school setting both before and during the implementation of the art programme. Typically, the interviews took between 60 and 90 minutes to complete. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim using a range of notation symbols in an attempt to capture some of the more nuanced aspects of the participants' communications (see Appendix C for details on the notation symbols used).

#### **4.2.3 Data Analysis**

A three-stage process was adopted for the analysis of the field work and interview data. At the beginning, memoranda were appended to the interview transcripts and field notes in order to capture the researcher's initial responses to the data. Following this, a more research-led approach was adopted whereby previous research in the SDT and CHAT fields were taken into consideration when generating the specific units of analysis and codes to be employed (see Section 3.3 for further details on the units of analysis, in particular see Table 3.2 for an outline of the Units of Analysis). Finally, once the theoretically-informed units of analysis had been assigned to the textual data, a more interpretative style of analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns within each unit. This latter style of analysis consisted of a cross-comparison between the theoretically coded data and the more open-ended memoranda in order to formulate interpretative categories and emergent themes. A multi-staged coding approach was adopted in order to seek a balance between allowing sufficient scope for the emergence of new perspectives on student engagement while also considering the data with respect to pre-existing psychological theory.

### **4.3 Findings**

#### **4.3.1 Life at "The Ashwick Centre"**

The case study presented in this thesis was conducted in a Pupil Referral Unit in the North-West of England. The school (which is referred to throughout this chapter as "The Ashwick Centre") is part of the local authority's alternative educational services and provides full-time education for Key Stage 3 and 4 (KS3 and KS4) pupils who have been excluded or referred from mainstream schools. Education, intervention and support is provided for students who often have a history of absence from school and/or failing to comply with school rules.

Students may be referred to the school at any stage during the school year and while KS4 pupils tend to stay until they leave at the age of 16, KS3 pupils tend to return to mainstream education after attending a “respite programme” which typically lasts between 6 and 12 weeks. The school caters for approximately 60 pupils at a time with admissions increasing towards the end of the academic year as adverse events unfold and accumulate at mainstream schools, thus resulting in exclusions and/or referral to the Ashwick.

The Ashwick Centre occupies a large, three-story building which was once served as a private dwelling and is surrounded by various more modern outbuildings and sports grounds which have since been added to cater for the ongoing expansion of the centre’s student population. Day-to-day activities take place within the boundaries of this historic residential site with rooms generally remaining locked when not in use. Rooms throughout the school building include: a receptionist’s office, a kitchen and dining area (shared by both teachers and pupils); several classrooms containing computers, desks and interactive whiteboards; an art room, a design technology room, a small room containing with soft furnishings dedicated for pastoral and relaxation activities, a dedicated nurture room (equipped with a computer, soft furnishings, board games, books etc.), a small computer room, a staff room and individual offices for the head teacher and the school’s full-time administrator.

As Maguire, Ball and Braun (2013) point out, one of the ways in which schools signal their policy priorities and their policy concerns is through the artefacts that they produce. From the outset of the school visits conducted for the current research, the Ashwick was represented on its signage and within publicly available literature as a service which was providing a “personalised curriculum”. In the educational policy literature, the notion of personalisation is a particularly vague policy concept. According to Maguire, Ball and Braun (2013), while the notion gained a very high profile as a policy agenda in the 2000s, since it was never explicitly mandated by government, it has tended to be exhortated as a “good idea” by schools rather than being adopted as a serious agenda in which students are afforded the opportunity to exercise a greater level of control over their education. As a result, according to Maguire and colleagues, a softer, less disruptive version of the policy is more often adopted by schools whereby students are offered some choice in the curriculum, but the basic structures and logics of schooling remain the same. Indeed, the type of curriculum on offer at the Ashwick corresponded with this latter, more widespread, institutional approach, as students were offered a greater array of vocational experiences and leisure activities than

they would have otherwise received at mainstream school. Thus, teaching and learning arrangements at the Ashwick Centre represent a mix of National Curriculum stipulations, vocational initiatives, extra-curricular activities and pastoral programmes.

On admission, pupils spend most of their time in the school's nurture room where they participate in a series of activities (e.g., group discussions, games, art activities, worksheets) which aim to foster an accepting and warm environment where pupils can develop positive relationships with teachers and peers. In addition, staff work with pupils to assess their literacy and numeracy abilities with a view to setting targets for learning and assessing their progress over the course of their placement at the centre. Core curriculum areas covered by teachers in the school include English, maths, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), engineering, science and art. Lessons take place in the morning hours between 9.30am and 12.30pm after scheduled "community time" when, upon arrival at 9am, pupils eat breakfast with teaching staff in a large communal dining area next to the kitchen. Once a week, an entire school day is devoted to a series of extra-curricular and vocational activities which take place both on and off the school site and include: cookery lessons, exercise sessions at a local gymnasium, military-style fitness training, outdoor adventure pursuits (e.g., climbing, raft building, orienteering etc.), independent work towards vocational and personal development qualifications (as part of the national Key Skills Awards) and vocational educational programmes with external providers in various areas of industry (e.g., hairdressing and beauty, construction and catering).

Recently, as part of a cost-saving initiative in the region, the school has merged with another local medical short stay school that teaches young people with mental health difficulties and pregnant teenagers as well as pupils who, due to illness, have been absent for more than three weeks or are in hospital with chronic conditions. These changes were introduced to save a head teacher's salary, reduce building costs and pool administrative costs. With these changes, the local authority has devolved some of its powers and the school has also been given full responsibility for its own budget and affairs (e.g., setting targets for school improvement and providing information transfers about pupils' academic progress to local schools).

The school's teaching staff includes one Head Teacher who is responsible for strategically leading the whole school and overseeing the management of special educational provisions



and safeguarding issues; three senior lead teachers with specialisms in science, literacy and communication development as well as behaviour, attendance and pastoral issues. While the Ashwick employs seven teachers who deliver lessons according to the GCSE curriculum within their subject specialisms, in times of staff absence/higher demand these teachers are sometimes required to facilitate more general school duties (e.g. classroom supervision, cover for absent staff).

The school also employs a relatively large team of ten Teaching Assistants (TAs) giving the school a 1:1 Teacher to TA ratio compared to a 2:1 national average (Ross, 2014). Teaching assistants are also often asked to support learning more generally by acting as additional support during class activities or by working with specific groups of pupils. This is often because the pupils in question have learning and/or behavioural difficulties and need additional support to understand and complete learning tasks. They also support the classroom teacher by undertaking variety of activities such as photocopying worksheets, setting up art equipment, rearranging the furniture for a particular activity, tidying up and keeping the classroom in good order, creating displays of pupils' work, helping on school outings or at school events. The school also employs a small number of additional staff to support its operation including a building officer, a caterer and cleaner, a receptionist and an administrator. Overall, the school's workforce is highly feminised since the large majority of the teaching staff at all levels are women.

Subject teachers and teaching assistants at the Ashwick often use reward and punishment systems as part of a broader institutional attempt to control and modify student behaviours. Rewards are allocated as part of a token behaviour economy system whereby encouraged behaviours (e.g., respectful conduct, completion of classwork etc.) are awarded scores and logged on a progress chart. Rewards such as gift vouchers are received by students once they obtain the requisite number of points. Punishments are used by staff to sanction offences such as aggressive behaviour and non-completion of school work. This typically involves actions such as withdrawing students from recreational activities, removing students from lessons, phoning parents to report student behaviours and exclusion from the centre until a staff meeting has been held with parents.

#### 4.3.2 Supporting Student Needs at the Ashwick: Practitioner Perspectives

The starting point for the forthcoming analysis will be to consider the perspectives and attitudes of the teaching staff with respect to the way in which support for the three basic needs feature in their everyday educational practices. Indeed, from a self-determination theory perspective, the ongoing relations between students and teachers is at the centre of the needs-satisfying process in the context of the school classroom. This is because in order to experience autonomy, competence and relatedness, students first have to interact in classroom environments that are capable of producing such experiences and feelings. Furthermore, given the importance of teaching behaviours such as providing students with a meaningful rationale for activities, conveying a sense of respect for students and providing them with tasks which offer an optimal level of challenge, it is important to understand why some teachers might be orientated towards behaviours which help to fulfil their students' psychological needs whilst others may be drawn to more controlling classroom practices.

In order to highlight the similarities and differences between the backgrounds of the staff who participated in the interviews, details of the five interviewees are outlined in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1**  
**Profiles of practitioner Interviewees**

Practitioner	Role	Background
Cathy	Local artist and illustrator	Cathy is a professional artist and illustrator who provides art workshops on a freelance basis in a variety of school, gallery and community contexts.
Sandra	GCSE Mathematics teacher	Sandra is a qualified Mathematics teacher who teaches at the Ashwick on a part-time basis.
Debbie	Teaching Assistant	Debbie is a qualified teaching assistant in the early stages of her career in education.
Gail	Teaching Assistant	Gail is a qualified teaching assistant and was working at a senior level in her role at the Ashwick with responsibilities for providing one-to-one support, assessments in Mathematics and English and working with external social and family support agencies.
Val	Teaching Assistant	Val is a qualified teaching assistant who has worked at the Ashwick for several years.

## Supporting relatedness

As we have seen in the analysis of the everyday operations of the Ashwick centre in Section 4.3.1, there is an emphasis on practices which seek to enhance student wellbeing. From a policy perspective, the notion of wellbeing is generally understood as a dynamic state that is enhanced when students can fulfil their personal and social goals (Statham & Chase, 2010). In terms of achieving this aim, relatedness support can be considered as highly valuable since ongoing displays of interest, warmth and understanding from teachers signal ongoing emotional support for students which will likely foster an environment that promotes mutual respect and more positive classroom relations. In this regard, the interview data was notable since interviewee accounts were uniquely positive. Indeed, across all the interviews, the participating staff recounted instances where they were able to develop productive working relations with students.

Nevertheless, the bases upon which these positive relationships were developed were quite varied. For staff who facilitated more applied and/or creative activities (i.e., cookery and art) lessons, the potential that tangible objects produced during lessons were lauded as a means to enhance the relationship between the teacher, the pupils and their parents. This was because such objects acted as concrete evidence of learning and achievements at school, generated discussion between the pupils, teachers and their family members, and were a way in which the school could indirectly build rapport and communicate positive messages with the pupils' caregivers:

Cathy: then they go back home and they go 'what have you done' they've got something to show them then and, and- I'm aware of that from being a teacher that it's great to have that tangible thing, object or painting

Gail: He, I got him where he could make a swiss roll all on his own with no help, goodness knows how many swiss rolls he made (h). His mum used to order one! (h) she used to put her order in! (h)

Indeed, when elaborating the role of these creative activities in the classroom, Val, Gail and Cathy all note that the process of creating itself helps the student to feel relaxed and in turn, this more relaxed state enables them to communicate with their teachers. Val and Gail compared this approach to tackling student issues more directly using worksheets on e.g., "anger management":

Val: so they sort of get relaxed don't they, and they start talking, then we start addressing things, but they don't realize, that we're addressing-

Researcher: yeh

Val: it gives you something to talk about

Cathy: well nearly all of them, their brain switches off, they start being creative and then they just open up and tell you the most amazing things whilst they are working ...and I think it just goes into a different gear and they forget and that their guard comes down and they forget that they're not supposed to tell you these things

For other staff, the ability to devote additional time to students, to work with them individually, on a one-to-one basis was considered key to developing positive relations with students since this enables them to gain a more in-depth understanding of their students' background, interests and difficulties:

Sandra: I've known them on and off since year 8, so the trust is there and I know exactly how each one ticks

Student progress within the socio-emotional and behavioural domains were acknowledged as providing an essential basis for effective learning and in the context of their daily practice, teaching staff frequently noted that it was a lack of these skills that posed as a barrier to academic development:

Debbie: you couldn't teach them because they had- maybe a lot of issues, behavioural issues or something and you've got to get over that first, over that hurdle before you can start teaching them again, that's the reason they are here

As Debbie notes in the interview extract above, conventional lessons and teaching approaches which presumably, the students at the Ashwick would have been exposed to at other mainstream schools, were often not effective for students who had, in her terms, a lot of emotional "baggage" that they carried with them to school. In many instances, staff produced accounts which took on a similar narrative structure whereby a student was experiencing some emotional difficulties which was contrasted with the more positive emotions that were generated by the activities they partook in:

Gail: she used to come in, the agony on her face at times, she'd be so hurt

Val: I know

Gail: I remember it, and she rolled her swiss roll up and she said, LOOK AT MINE! it looks like it came out of a fucking cake shop! (h) I'll never forget her! It was like

Researcher: surprise

Gail: yeh LOOK AT MINE (h)

Researcher: yeh, yeh

Gail: so that- and they can't see how it's gonna be a swiss roll til they've rolled it up, whoah! And you know, you have to be quite fussy making them haven't you know, keep on task, we got

Researcher: yeh so the end, the end result

Gail: oh cooking can be marvellous for them, like Leigh is quite happy making her cookies isn't she?

Val: she did all kinds of stuff, but she was very like emotional and quite anxious and loud and whatever- but she did well in the end, you know she got a good GCSE and she come and took all her stuff which was from last year, she's coming back to here isn't she, or more, and she was so proud of it all.

Therefore, it became clear from the interviews, that for staff, the ability to provide activities that offered students a sense of relief and temporary diversion from difficult emotional issues as well as activities where tangible outputs served as a clear reminder of successes, were particularly valued as a means to foster better classroom relations and educational outcomes.

## Supporting Student Competence

Despite being able to develop such positive relations with the students, teaching staff often reflected upon their difficulties when attempting to support their students to develop competencies in one or more the school's curricular emphases. Indeed, interviewed staff members expressed a sense of disquiet regarding the kinds of competencies they believed they ought to prioritise when supporting their students, especially in light of the various management directives, school policies and scheduling constraints that they were required to take into consideration on a daily basis. Although the Ashwick was representing itself as providing a "personalised curriculum", it was unclear to what extent the curriculum offering was tailored to individual students. However, it was clear that due to a range of issues such as timetabling, sizes of teaching rooms, numbers of specialist teachers available, etc, that student choice was constrained by these more practical aspects of school life. Indeed, given the way in which PRUs are required to negotiate multiple sets of policy prescriptions, grapple with ongoing budgetary issues and abide by established practices and procedures, it is perhaps not so surprising that the full range of competencies which staff at the Ashwick were seeking to foster amongst their students did not always co-exist in a stable and harmonious conceptual order. For example, Sandra, a Mathematics teacher working with the Key Stage 3 group, questioned the value of these wider curricular options for some of her pupils:

I've got A\* potential, quite a few of them actually, eh, but they only have three Mathematics lessons a week over there because two days, they, it's mandatory that they pick an extra-curricular day, so I've got kids who would go to university hopefully, doing gardening and bricklaying↑ and stuff that they- that a lot of them don't want to do

It is clear from Sandra's account above, that she was concerned that the time being devoted to non-academic curricular offerings was distracting students from their personal goals and interests. Similar concerns about alternative curricular options were expressed by Gail, a teaching assistant who delivered weekly cookery lessons. In particular, it was felt that in instances where students did not enjoy the particular activity, it would perhaps be more beneficial for such individuals to receive additional literacy and numeracy support:

Gail: see I don't think it's working as well as I thought it would, the big difficulty is the two hours, it just drags, keeping ones that don't want to do it for two hours, grrrr I mean if I think about it, look at all them on a Wed, all [lo-do, da da] when they could be having extra literacy or numeracy then, (inaudible) lessons, couldn't they?

More worryingly, it was even suggested that the emphasis upon non-academic pursuits could be exploited by school management as a strategic alternative to ease the pressures that school teaching staff face in terms of ensuring that students meet national standards of academic attainment:

Sandra: kids are either written off, too sick, not gonna get their GCSEs so they give them manual skills...

...The assumption of most PRUs like this, definitely here, that, 90% of the kids you get (whispers)....and therefore, you'll never get them through Maths and English and stuff, so let's get them out

Despite a wider curriculum offering in an attempt to offer a more personalised education for students at the Ashwick, recent changes to the legislation (in response to reported concerns regarding lower academic attainment at PRUs, for example see Taylor, 2012) have meant that inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regularly come to inspect the centre according to the same standards as mainstream schools. As a governmental regulatory body, Ofsted has significant powers because if inspectors decide that a school is inadequate and does not have the capacity to improve without additional help, the school in question can be subjected to more frequent reappraisals until it is no longer deemed to be failing. Furthermore, the senior managers and teaching staff can be dismissed and the governing body may be replaced. Consequently, as Debbie's account below indicate, we see that the doubts and sense of disquiet teaching staff expressed regarding the benefits of a broader school curriculum are coupled with a greater sense of urgency regarding the imperative to document and evidence standards of teaching, learning and assessment for the purposes of an Ofsted inspection

Debbie: it's a school and we're interested in their education

Researcher: Mmm

Debbie: And getting the right grades

Researcher: Mmm, yeh,

Debbie: Coz if you don't get your right grades you're not a proper school are you? It will be in the OFSTED report

As we see the exchanges between the interviewer and Debbie above, although her usage of rhetorical question is effective in distancing her personal views from the emphasis upon academic attainment as required by Ofsted, no alternative to this current institutional order is suggested. Rather than articulate an alternative state of affairs, teaching staff instead discussed their own responses to these demands, which varied from committing much time

and energy to delivering the level of documentation required of them to simply deciding to remain more focused on the content of lessons:

Cathy: I've lost contact with it all, I just go in and I just go I don't want to know your curriculum

Sandra: For me, coz that's part of my performance management, ehmm, I'm always getting hassled about assessing kids and do they know where they are going...ofsted-y kind of stuff that I have to focus on, that the kids need to know what level they are at and where they are going and that...you have to make choices there whether you deliver a good lesson or whether you back in up in your records, so I deliver a really good lesson, and sack some of the record keeping and shit- and bullshit that everyone thinks, you know- but then I often get into trouble over that

Beyond provisions in vocational training and teaching the compulsory "foundation" subjects (English, mathematics and science) in accordance with the National Curriculum, various extra-curricular activities that were not represented in the core and vocational curriculum (e.g., outdoor adventure pursuits, art and cookery) were valued for the opportunities they afforded students in relation to the development of non-codified knowledge and social skills such as persistence, problem-solving, teamwork, organisational skills, creativity, and communication skills.

Sandra: If they're gonna take them out of core subjects, bloody give them stuff like that, you need social skills, you need team-building skills, a lot of these kids can't work or play together

Cathy: you know if the majority of them are struggling with the literacy skills and so- they are not being asked to write something or read something, they are being asked to draw something, some fun...And if they persist in the activity and don't give up or- and I think you know from all the experience that I've had, I generally pitch things right

Overall, while staff indicated concerns about how the Ashwick's curricular offerings were split between vocational elements, which could sometimes be irrelevant to particular students and pressures to obtain a nationally-acceptable academic standard, there was more consensus around activities which were offered in order to enrich the students education by offering students more opportunities to be creative, physically active and socialise than they would typically receive within a mainstream school education. Interestingly, over the course of the interviews, the provision of art projects and programmes were appreciated for the ability they had to offer a more coherent educational experience for students since



participating in art could offer students a therapeutic pursuit as well as an academic pathway:

Sandra: Art for personal development I can understand, and it helps some of the emotional kids with emotions and things, sometimes you can kind of put into art you know, it kinda helps, lets us know what is going on in their heads and some of them find it very therapeutic and again, you can take it for GCSE so it's an option too for a qualification, do you know what I mean, so I think that's good for them. If they did that at all, that would be great, but my only objection- it's not only doing vocational, it's doing vocational at the same time as they would be doing- so they end up with less English and maths and science lessons because they were doing vocational, what they need is the whole- you know like four lessons a week of those >plus< vocational

Of course, the tensions perceived by staff regarding the time devoted to the various curricular offerings at the Ashwick were likely being compounded by a schedule whereby lessons would finish by 12.30 each day. This meant that efforts to provide a holistic yet suitably academic experience for students had to be concentrated into fewer hours compared to mainstream schools and despite this, both institutions are judged by the same Ofsted criteria. Indeed, these curriculum issues are underpinned by a deeper concern that the duration of the students' stay at the Ashwick did not interfere with their academic progress at mainstream school, as Debbie's account below demonstrates:

Debbie: the longer they're here, the more they're falling behind when they do go back to mainstream. Well that's what they're here for, we try and turn them around don't we?

### **Supporting Student Autonomy**

Beyond issues staff faced regarding the kinds of competencies that felt they ought to prioritise in their roles at the Ashwick, the interviews also revealed that attempting to foster an autonomous approach to learning amongst students was an even more fraught area of practice for this sometimes resulted in more direct tensions with management and practical difficulties with students. For example, Debbie noted that classroom learning was sometimes hampered by the fact that many students found it difficult to make decisions for themselves while Sandra felt that it was difficult to rely on groups of students to work independently while she did one-to-one work with individuals needing more attention during lesson time:

Sandra: Like Rhys can't be doing maths at this level do you know what I mean, but then that's reliant on one or the other of them doing independent work and a lot of them aren't capable of independently working-  
 Researcher: And do you ever set up the class like that?  
 Sandra:....If I say get on the computer and do a bit of research to help you  
 Researcher: Yeh  
 Sandra: And before you know it they are on games  
 Researcher: Yep  
 Sandra: So you can't do that

It was also noted that students' willingness to participate in activities was not always forthcoming. Indeed, outright refusal to participate in classroom activities was mentioned by all interviewees as a barrier they faced when attempting to deliver lessons.

The interview data did, however, reveal some interesting insights regarding classroom strategies which had been adopted by interviewees in order to manage student resistance to learning activities. While Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, and Ryan (1981) have proposed that teachers tend to have a general orientation toward dealing with students that could be viewed as ranging from being supportive of autonomy to being controlling, the strategies used at the Ashwick defied easy location along this continuum. Rather than adopting strategies which could be considered as either broadly autonomy supportive or as controlling, the strategies reported by staff were more nuanced. For example, when confronted by students with an outright refusal to participate school activities, staff drew upon the notion of "containment" when reflecting upon how they managed these difficult situations:

Sandra: I must admit I'm starting to dumb the lesson down a little bit just for containment, rather than challenge

Gail: the difficulty was that if you had one that was refusing to take part  
 Val: you couldn't sort of leave them on site, they used to have to come back didn't they or- you could contain them for a little bit  
 Gail: if you could contain them on the carpark a bit wouldn't you but then some of them would be [really sad coz they wouldn't get to go]

In the first of the two extracts above, Sandra discusses her reduction of the level of academic challenge offered to pupils during her lessons, particularly in cases where she simply plays films for pupils to watch with a view to "re-training them to stay in their seats for a couple of hours". In the second extract, Gail and Val consider how they manage situations when pupils refuse to participate in fitness training sessions which were provided at an outdoor

activity centre away from the main school site. While in Sandra's case, the decision to "dumb down" her lessons is pro-active, in the case of Jo and Val, the decision to try to encourage students to remain at the activity centre is in reaction to increasing tensions amongst students. However, in both cases, it is difficult to determine whether the staff are primarily attempting to gain authority over the pupils and to ensure that they maintain their control during their encounters with the group; or whether they are indirectly acknowledging the emotional difficulties that the students are experiencing at these times. Indeed, as a metaphor for various strategies and techniques used by staff in order to manage classroom situations and respond to confrontation, the term "containment" has a range of different connotations. In the theorizing criminal behaviour, for example, the notion is used to describe the internal psychological and external societal forces that act to restrain a person from illegal activity and as such is infused with ideas of social control. In the psychotherapy literature, however, the notion of containment takes on more healing properties as it is used to denote situations in which a person receives and understands the emotional communication of another without being overwhelmed by it and in turn, communicates their understandings of this back to the other person thus aiming to reduce anxiety and restoring their capacity to think (Douglas, 2007).

What is clear from the above accounts, however, is that the teaching staff's strategies are grounded in a more immediate concern to prevent the escalation of aggressive and confrontational behaviours and to return to a state of affairs where the pupils' behaviour is more predictable. Nevertheless, in both accounts, we see that containment strategies are far from ideal, since in Sandra's case, it results in compromised academic standards, and for Val and Gail, such strategies were not always reliable and resulted in disappointment amongst those students willing to participate in physical activities when they were all forced to return to the school due to the unwillingness and hostility of others. Thus, what might be considered as calming and caring actions in the cases of some pupils, might be considered as punitive or neglectful in the cases of others.

A more successful example of a "mixed" classroom strategy was that of positive reciprocity. By initiating a more intensive level of positive interaction with individual pupils by, for example, increasing verbal communications with him/her, breaking down the task into smaller components and inviting the students to make decisions about these various components as well as actively initiating and joining in on the task alongside the pupil:

Cathy: But it was a- you know I picked the colours out for him, and he's going – oh I'll have that blue and I'll do that red. And I was like there's the colours and just do it! And then that style is kind of like painting by numbers but- so even though he was generally disengaged, he still met the goal at the end, which is (a bit odd) (h)

Debbie: So I said, right there's a little bit of writing here we have to write that down on this piece of paper otherwise this diagram doesn't mean anything to anybody, *[in a deeper voice]* 'I'm not writing, I'm not writing', I went alright, so I drew three lines, look there's three lines there, just copy them three lines off that book, but because he had three lines to write on, he did it

Like the strategy of containment, however, it is not easy to determine whether reciprocal acts such as those outlined in the accounts above can be considered as wholly autonomy-supportive or controlling. For example, some of the commands used by Cathy and Debbie (i.e. "just do it!", "just copy them") could be considered rather directive and serve to exert a certain kind of pressure upon the students. Nevertheless, from their accounts above, it is clear that both Cathy and Debbie are demonstrating a form of reciprocity known as "reciprocal concessions" whereby the requester lowers his/her initial request, making the respondent more likely to agree to a second request (Cialdini, Vincent, Lewis, Catalan, Wheeler & Darby, 1975). In Cathy's case her original request was to independently produce a portrait which she then reduces to making a selection of colours to use when working, and in Debbie's case, her original request to independently complete a set of practice questions from a science textbook is subsequently reduced to retrieving and writing down relevant information. In each case, the student may have agreed to the second request because the staff member has reduced her demands thus making a concession which may have been interpreted as an act of kindness or an adjustment that makes the task more readily achievable. In this way, reciprocal acts may indirectly facilitate students in the development of autonomous practice in the future as the relevant skills and attitudes for such work have been successfully modelled for them.

### **Professional Autonomy**

Notwithstanding these challenging classroom dynamics, the interview data raised several questions regarding the level of autonomy teaching staff themselves were afforded and whether this had any impact upon their capacity to then foster a sense of autonomy amongst their students. All the interviewed teaching staff at the Ashwick reported that there were times that they disagreed with the school management over school policy. This included the

curricular emphases (e.g., Sandra expressed discontent with the vocational emphasis at the school and her teaching schedule being dominated with literacy work rather than capitalising upon her GCSE Mathematics expertise), the implementation of school rules (e.g., Gail disagreed with the implementation of a new rule whereby students could not take home the food they had made in cookery lessons as she believed it was a way of building a positive relationship between the school, the student, and their parents) and the implementation of behavioural policies (e.g., Debbie disagreed with what she felt was the over-usage of rewards and free time in the classroom by some of her colleagues). However, it was unclear to what extent they were afforded avenues to voice their opposition to these implementations. In the case of teaching assistants, decisions were presented as the business of management and, as the exchange between Gail and Val below subtly indicates, the culture within the organisation is one of quiet deference:

Gail: but Pat says no food to go home at all now, so when I cook with them for two hours and they can't take it home, they've got to eat it or leave it for somebody else to eat.

Researcher: they're not allowed bring food in the taxi even if it's in a lunch box or-?

Gail: no, no food in the taxi, end of

Val: they have thrown it out

Gail: see I don't think they've ever thrown the cookery stuff out, they've thrown their lunches out, not the cookery stuff, I don't think they've ever thrown cookery stuff out the window, I don't, I think it's been those lunches that we used to have that they used to throw

Val: oh yeh, they were awful

Gail: they were terrible weren't they, to be honest, you know, like when Pat decides, you don't like- but that's been part of what's keeping them going...

In Gail's account above, there are a number of subtle indicators that the scope for staff to object to the management's decisions is limited. Gail's addition of the expression "end of" to the newly implemented rule indicates that it is non-negotiable. Indeed, although she trails off at the point of reflecting on what typically happens when "Pat [school management] decides", it is possible to imagine that what is left unsaid is that less senior staff don't "challenge" management's decisions. Indeed, the fact that this is left unsaid may serve to further underscore the sense of futility that Gail seems to feel in relation to challenging her seniors. However, we are left with no such interpretative ambiguities in the case of Sandra when it comes to the levels of autonomy afforded to Ashwick staff:

Sandra: I'm not involved in the decision-making

Researcher: Right

Sandra: I don't know anyone who is

Researcher: Right

Sandra: Ehmm, I think it's [whispers] you know, it's not open to suggestion, [that's the way we've always done it, we call the shots], and that's red rag to a bull. Yeh, I mean just because always done it like that doesn't mean to say it's the best way, it's working, sometimes it has to be flexible, with different kids

Indeed, throughout the interviews, a number of images were employed by teachers when discussing their everyday practice which would suggest that a culture of surveillance was present within the school. For example, over the course of the interviews, instances were recalled where management "popped" into classrooms to "check" the teachers' management of student behaviour and the quality of the lessons. In addition, staff frequently referred to the pressure they were under to ensure that their paper work was sufficiently detailed and up-to-date, and that student progress was continually being assessed and evidenced. Indeed, if they did not maintain this standard, it was not long before they would receive "hassle" from management and get "into trouble" for omissions in their paperwork.

Unlike several of the staff employed directly by the Ashwick centre who lamented their diminished capacity to influence school decisions, we see that in her role as a freelance artist, Cathy considers her practice as one which she actively directs:

Cathy: Yeh well, when I've been involved in one or two projects, I've always- I treat them like proper commissions, so like I'm commissioned to do specific things which I negotiate at length with teachers that are involved or whoever is involved in the project and ehmm, there's a spell of getting to know the kids before we start the project and then I'll identify specific learning goals and specific learning outcomes

Indeed, within the extract from Cathy's interview above, we see that she considers the development of projects as an open process of "negotiation" with the school rather than one whereby she simply complies with directives from teachers in order to pursue a predetermined set of task outcomes. In addition, as a freelance artist, she is able to tailor her activities with respect to the particular level and interests of the groups she works with. Furthermore, Cathy notes that she is relatively free from the "checks" and hassles" faced by full-time school staff since her role often involves offering students a new creative experience in an alternative environment. Rather, she experiences her self-proclaimed "flash-in-the-pan" status as liberating since it frees her from the emotional strain and

institutional pressures full-time teachers often face in order to ensure that their students are making sufficient levels of academic progress:

Cathy: I do think though with those type of children, you do need. To be prepared but prepared to fail as well, not afraid to fail, if it doesn't work out it doesn't matter, and it isn't your fault (h)

The freedoms afforded to Cathy by virtue of her status as an external provider, however, is rather unique in the context of primary and secondary education in England, since, as Wilkins (2011) points out, a substantial amount of research in recent decades has examined the impact of an intensified state regulation of teacher's work. In this regard, then, the experiences of the Ashwick staff are symptomatic of wider trends. Wilkins (2011) suggests that one of the most widely understood of these trends is the emergence of an "audit/target culture", in which a multiplicity of targets are used to measure (primarily by quantitative data) the work of teachers and schools. Critics argue that this has led to an ultimately damaging risk-averse, target-chasing ethos where traditional notions of context-specific practice emerging through professional dialogue are suppressed (Seddon, 1997). Moreover, with the recent shift in the OFSTED inspection methodology towards schools' self-evaluation rather than direct inspection of schools and teachers, critics such as Ball (1997) have argued that this has reinforced the external control by overlaying the existing regulatory system with a more intensive and constant self-surveillance regime.

#### **4.3.3 Teaching at the Ashwick – An Activity Systems Analysis**

In order to consider the remit of the Ashwick school as a collective entity rather than as a series of isolated operations conducted by individual actors, the forthcoming analysis will draw upon activity theory (as elaborated in Section 3.3.1) in order to locate these idiosyncratic contextual elements within the wider set of relationships, histories and expectations surrounding teaching practice. Engeström's (2001) activity system model was used to organize the field work and staff interview findings from this study into activity system units, and map out the sources of systemic tensions involved in those activities. This analysis intended to identify what teaching staff at the Ashwick perceive as sources of conflicts in their professional duties. Much of this analysis involved using Engeström's model as a descriptive tool for identifying the complexities involved in the operations of teaching staff within each in single activity system units. This resulted in the identification of two primary activity systems to describe how joint activities at the Ashwick amongst teachers,

teaching assistants, the local council and national government agencies impact upon the performance of daily activities by the individual members of staff who were interviewed. The first activity system identified will be denoted as the “respite activity system” while the second activity system identified will be termed the “reintegration activity system”. Details of these two systems will be elaborated in the following two sections.

### *Activity System 1: The Respite Activity System*

The identification of an activity system based around the provision of respite at the Ashwick arises in light of the role played by the centre in providing temporary relief from the challenges brought by a small minority of students within the local mainstream school system. The major assumption underpinning respite provision within this context is that providing education for students who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion is stressful because of the ongoing and unremitting social, emotional or behaviour difficulties that the student is facing. Therefore, by providing temporary relief from these issues in the form of an off-site programme of education, the ability of the individual student to cope with the demands of a mainstream education is enhanced and the risk of disturbance to the academic performance of his/her peers is reduced. When considering the emergence of the respite-provision role, the legacy of social, educational and health service provisions for marginalised young people in the UK is important. Indeed, as Daniels and Cole (2002) point out, over the last hundred years or more, a range of interventions were developed for the diverse array of young people who were deemed to fit within this category. As these authors point out, while harsh, militaristic regimes operated at many early reformatory and industrial schools in the early 20th century (e.g., there were short-term industrial schools where persistent truants were initially locked in solitary confinement), by the 1990s, a consensus had emerged amongst staff working with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties on the need to provide these young people with positive relationships and educational experiences, caring communities, and relief from adverse life experiences<sup>7</sup>.

---

7 : Presumably, this shift owed much to the increasing influence of humanistic principles on educational practice from the 1970s onwards. Such principles were rooted in the work of scholars such as Erickson, Roger and Maslow. For further details see: Najafi, S. (2013).



Indeed, from the outline of the daily practices of the Ashwick in Section 4.3.1, it is evident that many of the centre's provisions cohere with this latter set of aims and working practices and that staff are involved in delivering a range of provisions which referred students would not otherwise receive at mainstream schools. For example, staff at the centre sought to develop positive, trusting relationships with students by facilitating a range of social activities in the school's nurture room. They also provided students with a wider array of vocational experiences and leisure activities in which to participate. Moreover, a lower staff-student ratio is maintained at the school in order to ensure students received more dedicated support during lessons.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that respite-based initiatives may also involve certain elements which can be interpreted as more coercive. For example, we have seen how teaching staff at the Ashwick used a range of punishments such as withdrawal or deprivation of access to recreational and/or physical education activities, removal of students from lessons for designated periods of time, exclusion from the centre for one or more days and staff communication with parents/guardians. Indeed, the centre itself was characterised by a high degree of security (e.g., rooms, storage cupboards and passageways consistently locked) which restricted the students' movements and usage of school resources and facilities. In addition, the students experienced a reduction in contact time with teaching staff and their peers as the school operated on a more restricted timetable when compared to mainstream schools. Nevertheless, despite the risks to the development of harmonious inter-personal relations that might come with such practices, all the interviewed staff recounted instances where they were able to develop positive working relations with students. Indeed, activities that offered students a sense of relief and temporary diversion from difficult emotional issues as well as activities where tangible outputs served as a clear reminder of successes, were particularly valued by staff as a means to foster better classroom relations and educational outcomes. Moreover, student progress within the socio-emotional and behavioural domains were acknowledged as providing an essential basis for effective learning and future academic development.

### *Activity System 2: The Reintegration Activity System*

The identification of an activity system based around "reintegration" arises in light of the Ashwick's role in working with students for a short period in order to help them to make a

successful return to mainstream school. In the context of the education system in England and Wales, “reintegration” is a term that has its roots in the Warnock Report (1978), where “locational integration”, “social integration” and “functional integration” of learners with SEN was recommended (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Nevertheless, the kind of integration envisaged within this report and indeed, in the core objectives set out for many PRUs, has been criticised for its emphasis upon simply working towards assimilating students with SEN into mainstream environments without making any major changes to these environments (see Pillay, Dunbar-Krige & Mostert, 2013; Levinson, 2016). Indeed, it was evident from the interview data that there was a concern amongst some staff that the duration of the students’ stay at the Ashwick did not interfere with their academic progress at mainstream school and during the period of the current research, several students were in the process of a “phased return” to mainstream schools (i.e. attendance at a new mainstream school was being introduced on a part-time basis and therefore, shared with the Ashwick over a period of weeks).

The urgency to carry out such reintegration work has been amplified in recent years for two key reasons. Firstly, as Daniels and Cole (2002) point out, providing alternative educational services for students with social and emotional difficulties has always been expensive. Indeed, we have seen how the Ashwick employs twice as many teaching assistants as would be expected at a mainstream school and that class sizes are typically much smaller than those at mainstream school. The cost of these endeavours poses much concern for local government, especially in recent years which have seen a series of sustained reductions in public spending as UK governments have sought to reduce budgetary deficits. Such economic concerns were particularly evident during the period of this research since the Ashwick had been merged with another local short stay school that serves young people with physical and mental health needs in order to save the cost of an additional head teacher’s salary.

Secondly, in recent years alternative providers have been under increased pressures to raise the standards of their performance as concerns have been expressed in government reports about the outcomes of their students, particularly with respect to their academic performance, involvement in crime and job prospects. One of the key issues identified in evaluation reports conducted by Ofsted (2011) and by government advisor, Taylor (2012) was that alternative providers were not always registered with the Department of Education

and were not routinely inspected in the way that mainstream schools are. Under political pressure, then, schools like the Ashwick have shifted away from an approach which simply prioritises personal and social education and instead, adopted timetables which emphasise instruction in the core subject areas of English, maths and science and are placing increased emphasis upon setting targets and monitoring students' academic progress.

### *The respite and reintegration activity systems – From tensions to opportunities*

Despite staff aims to deliver on objectives stemming from both respite and reintegration perspectives, a fundamental tension remains between these endeavours. This is because although meeting students social and emotional needs is typically acknowledged as a fundamental step towards continued academic development, the longer students spend at alternative schools, the more enculturated they are liable to become to an environment that treats them very differently from mainstream and this may, in turn, hamper attempts at reintegration. In fact, despite the obvious commitment that staff had to the personal development of their students, the interview data clearly demonstrated that they experienced inner conflicts with respect to the relative importance of the various curriculum elements that the school was currently offering. The interviews also revealed that staff struggled to foster an autonomous approach to learning amongst students as it was felt that many students found it difficult to make decisions for themselves and it had become difficult to rely on groups of students to work independently – skills which would undoubtedly ease the transition for students back towards mainstream school.

Nevertheless, while staff clearly felt inhibited by management's ongoing surveillance of their own practices, as the below quotations reveal, there were some indications that staff believed that there were some opportunities opening up for them to rationalise their less formalised teaching approaches. For example, Val's views on Ofsted inspections are challenged by Gail when discussing a student who had previously been failing to attend school but had since learnt how to create pompoms using cardboard templates and yarn. While Val explains that an Ofsted inspector would not immediately understand why her student's creations could be considered such a significant positive development, Gail presents an alternative point of view:

Val: if we said this pompom means this to this child, they [Ofsted inspector] wouldn't understand (h)

Gail: although I think if you were to see the monitoring that went with it, I'm increasingly feeling that you don't have to have those pieces of paper for it- but if you find a way of, that's what they want to see it measured, don't they

Similarly, Sandra suggests that documenting positive developments in her students' behaviours during lessons might be worthwhile despite the fact that these developments may not be officially recognised in educational policies:

Sandra: he will stay in his seat most of his lesson, that is progress compared to what they were like when I first got them, but that's not learning for rather than through you don't have APP in behaviour do you. But I need to log that really because that is progress

Therefore, one of the ways in which educational initiatives such as that which was delivered as part of the current research programme, can usefully contribute to practice within contexts such as that of the Ashwick, is to empirically examine whether existing strategies can be deemed effective and to consider how this might be the case so as to strengthen the articulation of rationales for innovation in approaches.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The present chapter has shown that, amidst a policy context of uncertainty of what constitutes effective practice, the Ashwick has developed a broad array of educational objectives, which stretches beyond the traditional mainstream school focus upon academic skills, and ventures into the fields of vocational training and skills for social and emotional wellbeing. On one hand, the wide range of activities that students are offered could be interpreted as a noble attempt to provide students with a more holistic education. However, in this chapter it has been argued that while certain institutional arrangements and teaching practices at the Ashwick were perceived by staff as worthwhile and effective, significant tensions and difficulties were also experienced as they attempted to address a wide range of educational objectives in a relatively short period of time.

During the interviews, teaching staff recounted cases in which they felt they had helped to develop more positive classroom relations by adopting practices such as working closely with students on a one-to-one basis, affording them the opportunity to discuss the problems they were encountering and facilitating creative activities where students could produce tangible outcomes. Nevertheless, despite their ability to make effective use of educational tools and practices to develop a more harmonious and stable set of classroom relations, it was evident

that staff attempts to develop students' levels of competence and autonomy were marked by greater degrees of difficulty. In fact, as they were required to respond to a range of different "rules" of educational practice (e.g., those laid out in the National Curriculum, school policy documents, management directives), staff experienced internal conflicts over the manner in which the Ashwick's curricular offerings were split between vocational elements and pressures to obtain nationally-acceptable academic standards. While vocational curricular emphasis was sometimes seen as irrelevant to students who wished to follow a more academic route, in the case of students with more profound difficulties, attending to their social and emotional needs was deemed essential before working towards more academic aims.

Indeed, one of the most fraught areas of practice to emerge within the findings, were attempts by staff to foster a more autonomous approach to learning amongst students. Staff revealed that because they found it difficult to rely on groups of students to co-operate and work independently, they sometimes adopted teaching strategies which they considered as less than ideal such as diverting students' attention with activities such as watching films. As Meo and Parker (2004) argue, such acts could be seen as a more general survival strategy in which the dilution of lesson content served to reduce the risk of confrontation with students and to build a particular type of "working consensus". Nevertheless, as staff were still keenly aware of the external pressures they faced to ensure good academic outcomes and co-operative classroom behaviour, such solutions risked negative evaluations from those in more powerful positions in the school community such as Ofsted inspectors and the board of management. Therefore, the present research revealed a substantial degree of dissonance between staff beliefs regarding effective working practices and worthwhile objectives and their interpretation of the demands made by management teams, which were sometimes regarded as misguided. Indeed, as Daniels and Cole (2002) observe, the shifting equilibrium between achieving classroom control, ensuring student welfare, developing social skills, providing vocational training and maintaining academic standards creates significant pressures for teaching staff in alternative provision.

## 4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented interview and field work data that were used to conduct a series of analyses informed by both SDT and CHAT. It outlined the basic institutional structure and everyday practices that take at the alternative school where the current research was carried out, otherwise known as the “Ashwick centre”. Staff perspectives on the demands and expectations that surround their daily activities at the school were explored from an SDT basic needs perspective. Interview data obtained from five members of staff was examined for themes relating to staff support for students’ relatedness, autonomy and competence needs. It was found that despite ability of staff to make effective use of educational tools and practices to develop a more harmonious and stable set of relations amongst students at the Ashwick, it was evident that attempts to develop their students’ levels of competence and autonomy were marked by greater degrees of difficulty. Following the SDT analysis, an activity systems analysis highlighted two central activities which characterised key operations at the Ashwick: the provision of respite and the facilitation of a reintegration back into mainstream school. It was argued that although these activity systems resided alongside each other, the tensions between pursuing student well-being and academic attainment, between providing dedicated support and value for money, as well as the ongoing pressure upon staff to deliver outcomes within a relatively short period made for an uneasy co-existence.

## **5. Student perspectives on their educational environments: SDT and CHAT approaches to the intrapersonal dynamics underlying engagement in learning**

This chapter triangulates questionnaire and interview research findings from five students (aged 13-14) who were attending the Ashwick and participated in the art initiative which was implemented with the aim of enriching their school's pre-existing curriculum. By considering their perceptions of the institutional, social and environmental context surrounding their everyday classroom and art-programme experiences, the primary aim was to develop a more comprehensive psychological understanding of the dynamics underlying their engagement in learning. Following an outline of the questionnaire and interview methods which were used, the outline of the theoretical research findings is foregrounded in a consideration of the particular social characteristics and personal circumstances of the participating students. The analysis in Section 5.2.4 employs an SDT perspective to consider the extent to which the students' school environment is perceived as either supporting or undermining their basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness. A CHAT perspective is then adopted in Section 5.4.5 to examine the participating students' adaptive orientations to their school environments, i.e., how they perceive the creation of favourable conditions for the achievement their own personal aims during school activities. Both questionnaire and interview responses revealed clear differences between participants in relation to their basic attitudes towards the Ashwick, their perceived levels of competence and relatedness and the bases upon which they participate in classroom activities. Nevertheless, the interviews revealed a certain level of ambiguity around issues of student autonomy as the participating students demonstrated a simultaneous awareness of the necessity of classroom co-operation to gain skills for future life as well as the constraints this sometimes placed upon their more immediate desires to disregard the classroom rules in favour of more leisurely pursuits. The implications of these differing perspectives and ambivalent views will be considered in light of future research efforts.

## 5.1 Introduction

Concerns have long been expressed about the quality of the education offered at PRUs, with several government reports concluding that many were still not providing schooling of the quality required to meet the often complex array of social, emotional and educational needs of their students (Ofsted 1995; DfCSF 2008; Ofsted 2011; Taylor, 2012). However, while much of government strategy focuses upon improving learning outcomes for PRU students (e.g., through more effective planning, collaboration and commissioning of services, more support for parents, earlier intervention and increasing alternative providers' accountability), little acknowledgement is made of the key role played by the PRU students themselves in terms of the ways in which they engage with their education. Moreover, as Michael and Frederickson (2013) point out, relatively little research has been conducted on the views of PRU students themselves regarding their experiences and thoughts on their needs. This is despite the fact that school exclusions have been linked to a host of negative longer-term outcomes with respect to quality of life, including: involvement in crime, (Berridge, Brodie, Pitts, Porteous & Tarling, 2001), non-participation in further education or employment, low academic attainment (Daniels, Cole, Sellman, Sutton, Visser & Bedward, 2003), increased involvement with Social Services Departments due to concerns about well-being (Parsons, Hayden, Godfrey, Howlett & Martin, 2001) and substance abuse (Powis, Griffiths, Gossop, Lloyd & Strang, 1998).

Of those studies which have focused on the views of PRU attendees, the disrupted nature of their school careers means that it is often difficult to negotiate access to this population and consequently, sample sizes are typically small. Nevertheless, there are striking consistencies in the findings reported across this literature. One of the most prominent themes to emerge from analyses of interviews was the significance assigned by students to the positive relationships that they had developed with teachers and peers during their time at the PRU. For Hart's (2013) participants ( $N = 6$ , aged 9-13) teachers were recognised as providing valuable external support as well as promoting intrinsic motivation to learn, while for Cullen and Monroe's (2010) participants ( $N = 10$ , aged 11-14) the calm, reliable, respectful and positive manner of staff was particularly appreciated (for similar findings see also Pirrie, MacLeod, Cullen, McCluskey, 2011). Another particularly prominent theme arising within the literature was the role played by the structure and delivery of the PRU's curriculum. For example, while Michael and Fredrickson's (2013) interviewees ( $N = 16$ , aged 12-16)



highlighted the value of their school's extracurricular activities and relevance of their subject lessons, Capstick (2005) found that PRU students ( $N = 11$ , aged 11-14) perceived home-based, material-based and activity-based rewards (e.g., "a trip out", "a good phone call home" and "being given a treat") as more effective than teacher-based rewards (e.g., student praise) in promoting changes in their behaviour and increases in their motivation to learn.

Although some of the above studies are theoretically informed (e.g., resilience perspectives in the case of Hart, and the psychology of rewards in the case of Capstick), the majority are driven by the data so that researchers pursue more open-ended investigations in order to identify analytic themes. Therefore, theoretically informed explorations of the social, emotional and educational needs of PRU students are very rare, but useful for the development of a deeper understanding of the psychological processes that underlie students' motivations, attitudes and behaviours. In this respect, SDT provides a useful opportunity to systematically explore students' views on the conditions they face in their educational environments with respect to what the theory proposes as their fundamental psychological needs. In addition, adopting a CHAT approach to the analysis offers the opportunity to explore students' views on their educational environments from a more situated, experientially-derived perspective.

## **5.2. Aims of the Present Study**

The first aim of this study was to examine the extent to which the participating Ashwick students perceive their basic psychological needs as being met by within their current educational environment. From an applied perspective, it is worthwhile considering the extent to which research instruments which have been developed by SDT researchers to address more purely theoretical questions might have some practical utility for teachers wishing to identify where their students might need additional support with respect to their sense of competence, relatedness and autonomy. It is also important to attend to the issue of PRU students' basic psychological needs because the core aim of most PRUs is to address the social, emotional and educational difficulties experienced by their attendees so that they may make a successful return to mainstream schools. The perspectives of students in alternative educational settings are also interesting from a theoretical point of view because although SDT takes a universalistic stance in positing the same set of needs in all humans, it

still retains a more particularistic stance in relation to the capacity of many cultural forms to facilitate the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Chirkov, Ryan & Willness, 2005). Therefore, it is important to assess the extent to which students' needs are being met across a range of different educational contexts, including settings which act as an alternative for students who have had difficulties in mainstream education.

In order to retain a stance which is more sensitive to the particular qualities of alternative school contexts, the second key aim of the present research was to explore the students' views on their educational environments from a more situated, experientially-derived perspective. Therefore, the forthcoming CHAT analysis examines participating students' "adaptive orientations" to school where the focus will be upon the attitudinal bases upon which they participate in their education (Zarakovsky, 2014). As Langemeyer (2006, para. 41) points out, because individual students often have to deal with the fact that they do not possess the capacity to resolve the problems and contradictions they may experience within their specific educational environments (e.g., co-operating with the class group versus doing what they personally desire during lessons), they are forced to try "to find a way through", and ultimately to adopt forms of behaviour which may even obscure their original issues and difficulties. It is important to investigate the bases for students' actions because these can mean the difference between whether effective solutions are developed in response to difficulties experienced at school or whether students' attitudes and endeavours are thwarted by prevailing conflicts and constraints.

## **5.3 Methods**

### **5.3.1 Questionnaire Development and Procedure**

Because the majority of questionnaire research in SDT tends to focus on either one specific need at a time or else concentrates on teachers' support of the basic needs, it was necessary to develop a more comprehensive questionnaire to draw together questions on both the students' self-perceptions and their views of teachers' practices. A questionnaire was developed by sourcing questionnaire items from the following literature: Williams and Deci (1996), Standage, Duda and Ntoumanis, (2003), Torsheim, Wold & Samdal (2000) and, Johnston & Finney (2010). Items were selected from the pre-existing research on the basis of the following key criteria: applicability to the English secondary school context, clarity of

wording, usage of basic vocabulary and prevalence of items across instruments (i.e., questions which featured across multiple questionnaires were preferred for replicability and comparison purposes). The final questionnaire comprised of 36 items with six questions randomly ordered for each of the basic needs and needs support constructs (i.e., Relatedness, Competence, Autonomy, Relatedness Support, Autonomy Support and Competence Support). A piloting and validation exercise was then undertaken with a sample of 262 students aged between 13 and 14 years (45% female, 95.8% of participants reported their ethnicity as white). 93% of participants attended a mainstream secondary school in Northern Ireland while the remaining participants attended an alternative in the North-West of England (See Appendix D for details on questionnaire and validation procedure).

To investigate the number of underlying factors within the data obtained during the pilot exercise, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using robust maximum likelihood estimation procedures in the Mplus statistical package. Six factors were extracted and the standardised factor loading scores revealed some relatively distinct constructs but also showed that a small number of items cross-loaded onto multiple factors. As all the *Relatedness Support* items, all the *Competence Support* items and two of the *Autonomy Support* items loaded onto a single factor, it is suggested that the respondents may have viewed the actions of their teachers in a more global sense. However, when it came to the respondents' own needs, the factor analysis revealed distinct *Relatedness* and *Competence* constructs, with the majority of the items for these constructs loading onto separate factors. However, because the items intended to measure the *Autonomy* construct either cross-loaded onto the needs support factor or else failed to load onto any factors at all, it was decided to cease using these autonomy items in the subsequent questionnaire analysis.

Following this piloting phase of the research, questionnaire research was then conducted with the five students attending the Ashwick. Questions were read aloud for some pupils in an effort to minimize any burden to those with reading difficulties as well as to ensure that concentration levels are at an optimum. It was emphasized that participation is voluntary and pupils were advised to notify the researcher if at any time they wish to cease/suspend questionnaire completion (see participant information sheets and consent forms in Appendix E)

### 5.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews were held with five students who participated in the art initiative, in order to explore their individual interests, concerns, future aspirations as well as their views about teaching, learning and the art project. A schedule of questions was developed in a format which was less dependent upon an interview style which assumes that verbal communication is the only way in which a person's experience can be represented (see Appendix J for interview schedule). Thus, by involving participants in tasks that were more visual and kinesthetic in nature, a more indirect questioning style was adopted. According to politeness theory, indirect forms of communication reduce the interviewer's potential to be perceived as imposing thereby mitigating any threats that might be associated with an audio-recorded research interview (for details see Brown & Levinson, 1987). This was an important consideration to take into account given that staff at the school informed the researcher prior to conducting the interviews that some of the pupils' previous experiences with interview formats may have been in contexts that were perceived as threatening (e.g., interviews with police, social workers etc.).

In order to develop a less threatening atmosphere for the students, questions on peer and teacher relations, attitudes to school, future plans, and reasons for attending school, were embedded in a series of exercises (e.g., genograms depicting significant others' attitudes to school; axioms to elicit the participants' core constructs with respect to their relations with teachers, a ranking task for reasons to go to school etc.) which were inspired by Beaver's (2003) guide on information gathering strategies for professional Educational Psychologists (see Appendix J for a copy of the interview schedule). This more open-ended interviewing format was also adopted to allow new ideas to be brought up by participants during the interview but also to allow the researcher to explore various SDT and CHAT themes. Finally, the flexibility of this interview format also helped the researcher to tailor questions according to the circumstances of the particular participant being interviewed, thus capitalizing on the more detailed knowledge of the research context which had been gained by spending extended periods of time in the school setting both before and during the implementation of the art programme. Typically, the interviews took between 30 and 45 minutes to complete. All interviews were conducted in classrooms during the regular school hours. In accordance with BPS and Edge Hill University ethical guidelines, participation in interviews was completely voluntary and required informed consent from participants (An information

sheet and consent forms for the research are included in Appendix D). All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim using range of notation symbols in an attempt to capture some of the more nuanced aspects of the participants' communications (see Appendix C for details on the notation symbols used)

## 5.4 Findings

### 5.4.1 Profiles of the Participating Ashwick Students

The participants for the current research were drawn entirely from a group of Key Stage 3 students who were all attending the Ashwick centre. Details of the five students who participated on the art programme and were interviewed for the purposes of the current research are outlined in Table 5.1:

**Table 5.1: Profiles of student participants**

Student	Age	Background
Liam	14	Excluded from school for history of aggression towards other pupils and teachers as well as inciting violence in other students. He lives with his parents and siblings and has a disrupted history of schooling, having attended various schools in his local town.
Luke	14	Referred to the Ashwick due to disruptive behaviour at school. He lives with his parents and a younger sibling. Upon entry to the Ashwick, his literacy and numeracy assessment scores were a cause for concern for his teachers.

Dylan	13	Referred to the Ashwick due to aggression towards other pupils at school. He lives with his mother and siblings and has a disrupted history of schooling, having attended various mainstream and alternative schools in his local town. At the time of the research, the school were in the process of seeking a special educational needs statement for Dylan.
Joshua	13	Permanently excluded from school for bullying. He lives with his parents and a number of his siblings. At the time of the research study, he was due to appear in court facing criminal charges.
Natasha	13	Excluded from school as a result of a bullying incident. She has recently moved out of her father's house and moved in with her mother in a neighbouring town and is seeking a place at a mainstream school there. Time was scheduled for Natasha to complete the Basic Needs Questionnaire on numerous occasions. However because during the questionnaire phase of the research she was being repeatedly sent home from the Ashwick and was not permitted to return to the school until she had participated in a meeting with staff alongside her parents, it was not possible for her to complete the questionnaire.

---

Although small, the profile of the above sample reflects the pattern evident in the statistics on exclusion from school: namely, that boys are over-represented amongst those excluded from school; and that the majority of young people permanently excluded from school are between 12 and 14. All participants were White and from Britain, which is more reflective of the demographics within the particular local authority area to which these students belong where over 97% of those attending state-funded secondary schools are classified as White British (DfE, 2016).

All the participating pupils listed in Table 5.1 travelled to school from a neighbouring industrial town which ranks within the top 10% of the most deprived areas in England according to the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation<sup>8</sup> (DfCLG, 2010). According to the local council's most recent commissioned study of the economy within the region, house prices in this locale are almost 20% below the local average, and approximately a third of the population residing there are employed in what are described as low income roles in process plant, machinery and elementary occupations (the national average in this occupational grouping is 18%) (DfCLG, 2015). Furthermore, there is a high concentration of unemployment in the area with the rate of Job Seekers Allowance claims reaching almost twice the regional average. On top of these economic issues, the local authority has described the town as "significantly underperforming" when compared to other urban areas in the region in terms of local provision of cultural and social amenities such as cinemas, leisure and heritage centres, art galleries and music venues.

Nevertheless, most of the interviewed pupils were keen to discuss the range of leisure and sporting activities they participated in with their peers and/or family members. These activities were often informal (i.e., not facilitated by external organisations) and took place in or near the family home for example, fishing in the local river, family trips to cinemas in neighbouring towns and cities, riding bikes around the community area and playing computer games in friends and family homes. In addition, most of the interviewed students had played sport at a competitive level. Interestingly, in cases where the sport in question had also been pursued by family members (e.g., a brother boxing in national and international tournaments, an aunt who coached cheerleading teams), the pupils in question continued to train and compete on a regular basis. However in those cases where the sport was pursued as part of a school team (football and rugby), the students in question were no longer participating in the sport in any formal sense. In the case of the pupil who had played football, the student in question was no longer motivated to play as he believed the team failed to work together and continually lost matches whereas in the case of the pupil who had played rugby, the student had been disqualified from the school team for violent behaviour. Beyond these sporting endeavours, illegal activities such as underage smoking,

---

<sup>8</sup> An index which measures deprivation according to income, employment, health and disability, education, skills and training, barriers to housing and services, the living environment and crime

consuming banned substances and shop-lifting were mentioned by two of the participating students as occasional pursuits they took part in with friends during their free time.

While some of the pupils who were interviewed were unaware of their parents' attitudes towards school, for those who did have some insights on this issue, it was clear that parents had adopted extrinsic motivations towards schooling and did not view life at school as an inherently pleasurable experience:

Liam: She'd think that- I know it's boring like, but you have to do it.

Despite this mixed attitude towards school, the influence of the participating pupils' family was very evident in relation to their future career aspirations. In fact, with the exception of Dylan, all of the pupils interviewed revealed that they wished to pursue precisely the same career as an immediate family member, which in the case of the interviewed students involved a mother and grandmother who worked in a care home, a father who worked as a mechanic and another who worked as a bricklayer and an older brother who competed internationally as a professional boxer.

#### **5.4.2 Student Perceptions of Mainstream School and the Ashwick Centre Compared**

When asked to describe their overall impression of school, the interviewed pupils had consistently negative responses, summing up their attitudes towards school in a range of generic negative attributions such as: "shit", "crap", a place that was "hated". However, when asked about their impressions of the Ashwick centre, more specific details on the bases for these negative opinions were forthcoming. In the cases of Luke, Joshua and Dylan, the perceived "crowded" nature of mainstream schools emerged as a major reason for discontent, but in the cases of Joshua and Dylan, the source of this discontent lay with their peers and the potential this created for arguments and tensions to emerge. In the case of Luke, however, the availability of help from teaching staff was a primary consideration as the interview extract below featuring his initial impressions of the Ashwick centre demonstrates:

Luke: Thought it was good

Researcher: Yeh? What made you think it was good?

Luke: Dunno, like it's smaller innit, smaller groups and that



Researcher: Grand, yeh  
Luke: So I'd get more help

Thus, the Ashwick's smaller class size (approximately 5-6 students per class) was deemed preferable to larger mainstream school classes (average class size in the North-West of England in 2011 was 24, see DfE, 2011). While these students had a more positive view of the Ashwick centre when considered in light of their previous schools, the same was not true of all the interviewees. Over the course of her interview, Natasha explained that she did not feel she belonged at the Ashwick centre due to the type of school work she was receiving from her teachers which she believed was only being given to her by her teacher "for the sake of it". In the interview extract below, she refers to mainstream school as "normal school" thus constructing the Ashwick centre as being deviant from the curriculum standards and levels of attainment within mainstream school:

Researcher: yeh, so you wanna be doing tougher work, kind of like, something a bit more like what people your age do  
Natasha: our age, yeh  
Researcher: yeh ok  
Natasha: just like what we'd do in normal school  
Researcher: yeh yeh, ok, mmm, so do you feel more like you belong at a normal school then?  
Natasha: Mmm

Not every student, however, had particularly well-defined views about the Ashwick centre. For reasons which were not initially clear, Liam had a more ambivalent view of the centre which, as the interview extract below demonstrates, rapidly oscillates between more damning and tempered versions:

Researcher: how do you feel about the [Ashwick] at the moment?  
Liam: Shizer.  
Researcher: >say it again<↑  
Liam: Shizer, Shizer]  
Researcher: [what does that mean? ↓[  
Liam: ]Shiii-zer, so like, it's another word for shit  
Researcher: oh, ok ] (you don't like the Ashwick?  
Liam: [it's alright as well, it's alright]

Nevertheless, when considering the centre in relation to his previous school, it is clear that he has developed a more monolithic view with respect to the teaching staff across these establishments:

Researcher: Mmm, ok, mmm are there many differences between this school and the school you were in before  
Liam: No  
Researcher: No?  
Liam: teachers still nag at me

Dylan demonstrated a similar level of ambivalence to Liam but for altogether different reasons. Rather than adopting a more global view of mainstream and alternative educational environments as Liam does, in the interview extract below we see that, from Dylan's perspective, an uneasy relationship exists between his own views and the central objective of the Ashwick, which is to offer its attendees an alternative educational experience in order to prepare them for their return to mainstream education:

Dylan: I would just say, it's a terrific place and if you buck up your ideas you will be able to go back to mainstream  
Researcher: Ok if you buck up your ideas, what do you mean by that like?  
Dylan: There's like good (inaudible) there, Get to go back to mainstream  
Researcher: And do you want to go back to mainstream?  
Dylan: Well not- Yes: but no  
Researcher: No? some day do you want to go back?  
Dylan: Not really (h)  
Researcher: Not really, so do you think you'd be happy staying somewhere like here on the long term  
Dylan: Yeh

In the interview extract above we see that Dylan has a positive view of the Ashwick centre, considering it a "terrific place" but as the discussion progresses, we see that he wishes to stay in an environment of this nature in the longer term. This is problematic because the one of the key objectives of institutions like the Ashwick is to work towards "reintegration" to mainstream school within a relatively short period of time (e.g., 6 to 12 weeks).

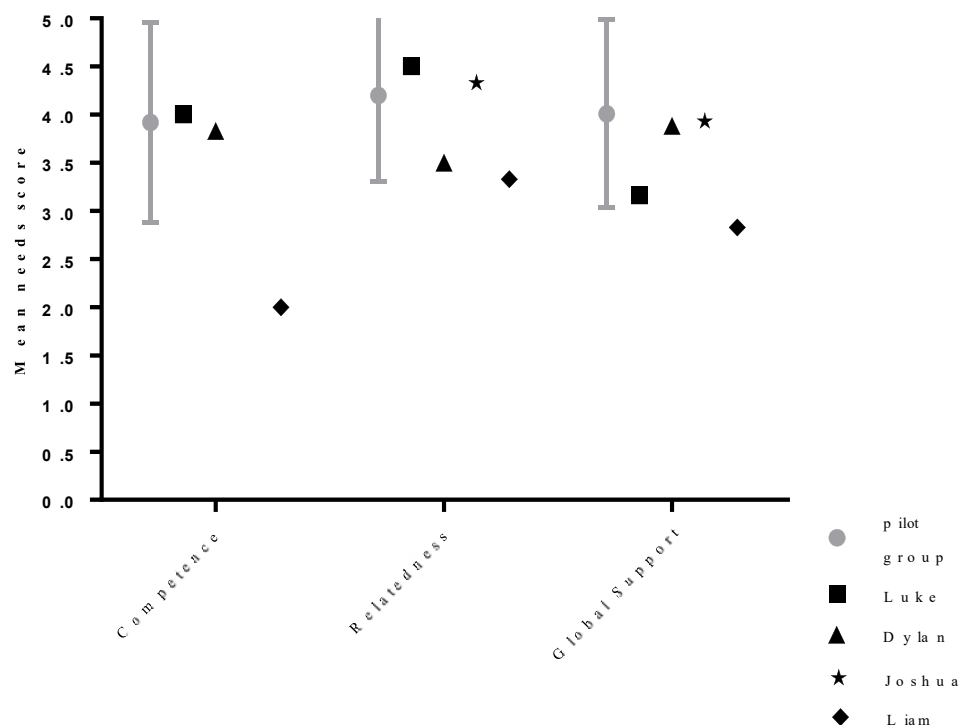
Overall, it is evident that there are considerable differences between students in terms of how they generally perceive the Ashwick school environment. While Joshua and Luke were both positively disposed to the more dedicated attention of the teachers based the Ashwick, Natasha had a more negative view of the environment, considering it as deviant from the higher academic standards within her previous mainstream school. Liam and Dylan, however, were less decisive, and had demonstrably more ambivalent views.

### 5.4.3 Basic Needs Satisfaction and Support: PRU student participants

On the basis of findings from the pilot exercise (see Section 5.3.1 and Appendix D), the analysis of the PRU questionnaire data proceeded with the following 3 factors: *Teacher Support* (a composite of all needs support items), *Relatedness* and *Competence*. Figure 5.1 presents mean scores for the basic needs satisfaction and support items for the individual participants on the art programme at the Ashwick, and for comparison purposes, the 262 pilot group participants who completed the basic needs questionnaire during the piloting phase of the research. Since the formation of perceptions on needs satisfaction and support are subjective processes, it is difficult to translate these scores into any definitive, normative or predictive statement about whether students' perceptions of their needs are "sufficient" for optimum levels of engagement. However, if we compare the Ashwick students' needs satisfaction and support scores with those of the pilot group, we see that with the exception of one student, all these individual scores remain within one standard deviation of the pilot group means (Pilot Group Relatedness  $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ; Pilot Group Competence  $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ , Pilot Group Global Support  $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ).

**Figure 5.1**

*Basic Needs Questionnaire - PRU participant scores*



In the case of Liam, however, we see that for some of the constructs, his scores lie beyond one standard deviation from the pilot group means and are lower than all of his peers at the PRU. In the case of the competence construct, his score is particularly depressed ( $\bar{X} = 2$ ). We also see that while Luke's Relatedness ( $\bar{X} = 4.5$ ) and Competence scores ( $\bar{X} = 4.00$ ) exceed those of the pilot group (as well as his peers), his perception of his teachers' support for his basic psychological needs ( $\bar{X} = 3.16$ ) is lower than that of the pilot group and closer to the relatively low scores obtained by Liam ( $\bar{X} = 2.83$ ). While Dylan's Competence ( $\bar{X} = 3.83$ ) and Global Support ( $\bar{X} = 3.89$ ) scores are closer to the pilot group, his relatedness score ( $\bar{X} = 3.5$ ) is considerably lower than that of the pilot group, and again, lies closer to the more depressed score obtained by Liam. While Joshua failed to complete all of the questionnaire due to difficulties he faced in concentrating, we see that his scores for Relatedness and Global Support are much closer to the pilot group.

### **Perceived Competence**

Like the questionnaire data, the interviews also revealed differences between the Ashwick students in terms of their perceived levels of competence. Indeed, the pattern of differences between students on their questionnaire responses was consistent with that of their interviews. For example, in line with the low competence score obtained by Liam in the questionnaire, when the issue of artistic competence came to the fore in Liam's interview, he describes a recent tendency for his pictures to be "terrible". On top of this negative attribution of his work, the interview extract below demonstrates the external basis on which his self-evaluation is formed:

Liam: coz recently like where I don't wanna- eh me pictures would be terrible like, other people who've done it, theirs is better than mine, apart from like the spaz's and that

Researcher: ok so you compare what you do to what other people do? Yeh?

Liam: Yeh

For other participants, such as Luke, the issue of competence in relation to art is far less problematic – his classroom efforts are judged in a more favourable light and, in contrast to Liam, he judges his work according to standards which are derived internally via direct experience:

Researcher: did you feel like you succeeded during that lesson  
 Luke: Yeh  
 Researcher: What do you think of as success in an art lesson  
 Luke: It's good (inaudible)  
 Researcher: And how do you know it's good?  
 Luke: Coz I've been- experienced it myself, so that's how I know it's good

Like Luke, Dylan's level of perceived competence was considerably higher than that of Liam and again, like Luke, the basis on which he evaluates his work is internal. So while Dylan demonstrates an awareness of the role of examinations in state-level determinations of academic ability, he still attributes success to the spontaneity and novelty of his creative process

Researcher : What would you say is success in school ?  
 Dylan : Ehhh ... ehh I don't- (success in school mmmm- like...passing)\* all your exams and stuff like that  
 Researcher : And can you give me an example, in art, what would you say is success in art ?  
 Dylan : Ehhh ...success in art, big success or just like an average one?  
 Researcher : For you, like, what you say is success  
 Dylan : For me ... making that squid, octopus out of that like can't remember pipelines, for the first time ever, off the top of me head

*\*Note = mumbles*

Overall, then, it appears that there are key differences between individual students not only in terms of their levels of perceived competence in the domain of the visual arts, but also in terms of the basis on which they derive these perceptions.

### **Perceived Relatedness**

Perceptions of peer relations were also somewhat varied amongst interviewees at the PRU. As the questionnaire data demonstrates, Dylan and Liam have considerably lower scores on the perceived relatedness items ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.5,  $\bar{X}$  = 3.32 respectively) than Luke and Joshua ( $\bar{X}$  = 4.5,  $\bar{X}$  = 4.33 respectively) Indeed, these differences between individual pupils emerged during the interviews. While most of the interviewees could quickly list off several peers that they considered as close friends, when asked about such relationships, Dylan revealed a lack of positive relations with other young people in his locale:

Dylan: Hmmm, I don't really have any friends my age  
Researcher: Yeh ok, mmm  
Dylan: Coz they're all nobs where I live [laughter]

Indeed, Dylan and Liam both revealed that when they were provoked by peers, relations sometimes descended into physical violence:

Dylan: Coz I was playing on the field where I wasn't supposed to, then he went in, snitching to teachers, came up, he came up as if he were the teacher and I went to walk past him but as I did, got my leg out, kicked him right under the leg and he went pllleeh covered in bird shit [laughter] his nose was black, coz he got bird crap on his nose

Liam: yeh, I hate people giving me snotties<sup>9</sup> and that, the way they look at you like.  
Researcher: so do you feel like people are a bit aggressive to you, like trying to start fights  
Liam: yes, everyone, like Jack and that sometimes he'll like try and get a best out of me, just to get me going and that and just he'll start a fight with me

Therefore, again, it appears that there are key differences between individual students not only in terms of their levels of perceived competence in the domain of the visual arts, but also in terms of their relations with their peers. While most had developed close friendships with peers, those who obtained lower scores on the relatedness items pointed to peer relations marked by aggression and physical violence.

### **The Ambiguous Case of Autonomy**

Although the autonomy item scores for the Ashwick participants were omitted due to the failure of the pilot questionnaire analysis to find a distinctive autonomy construct (see section 5.3.1), it is useful to attend to the interview data in order to consider whether any insights might be provided in light of these preliminary findings. Indeed, regardless of whether autonomy, competence, or relatedness are recognised and consciously valued by an institution or its attendees, SDT still proposes that the deprivation of any of these needs will have a demonstrable negative impact on an individual's growth and wellness. Moreover, according to Sheldon and Niemiec (2006), although the basic psychological needs will often be satisfied to an approximately equal extent; people's lives may become configured such

---

<sup>9</sup> Colloquial expression to describe a hostile look that expresses contempt or disapproval

that they experience an imbalance in their levels of need satisfaction. Therefore, it is argued that it is important to consider all three basic psychological needs, because it is proposed that an imbalance among the satisfaction of the psychological needs reflects inappropriate allocations of resources across the different domains of life, which may induce stresses and conflicts that ultimately detract from well-being.

As the following interview extracts demonstrate, the interviewees demonstrate a simultaneous awareness of the educational purposes of school and the constraints this sometimes places upon them in their role as students. For example, when reflecting upon the difference between participating in art projects and other lessons, Dylan explains that one of the benefits of the former is the freedom it offers him to do artwork in accordance with his own interests and desires:

Dylan: You don't get some, like a little bit of free time every now and then,  
Researcher: Yeh  
Dylan: To do what you want instead of like a set project for ye

However, in positioning the role of the art project in relation to other subject lessons, the role of "set projects" is not outrightly dismissed, and "free time" is not conceived as something infinite, but rather, is qualified as something that is required in "little" amounts, "every now and again". Similarly, in reflecting on the extent to which he can express his personality in the classroom, although Liam demonstrates an awareness that he simply cannot do as he wishes in the classroom, when invited by the interviewer to suggest what he might do as an alternative, his initial response indicates a certain level of uncertainty. Indeed, if his follow up suggestion can be considered resistant, it is certainly a more passive type of resistance:

Liam: When I'm in class, you can't just like be yourself, you can't do what you want in the classroom  
Researcher: Yeh, so you don't feel free in the classroom?  
Liam: No  
Researcher: Mmmm, what would you be doing to be yourself in the classroom that you can't do?  
Liam: Dunno (h) I'd ignore everyone

## Students' Perceptions of Teacher Support for their Basic Psychological Needs

When evaluating their teachers, the interviewed students' often adopted a very decisive approach in which teachers were assigned broadly positive traits or dismissed with strongly negative characteristics and rather generic insults (i.e., some teachers were considered as "sound", "the best", "alright" while others were deemed "narky", "nosy", "a bitch", "twats", "nob head"). These sweeping assessments of their teachers may point to a potential reason why the pilot group's responses to the questionnaire items were inter-correlated with respect to their teachers' support for their three basic psychological needs. The negative attributions employed by the interviewees above, may be an instantaneous response which provides an efficient summary of how they feel about their teachers in general. At the same time, such attributions might indicate deeper issues with respect to the students' psychological needs. Indeed, in some cases, upon further probing and prompting from the interviewer, some students provided more detail on the bases for their views which clearly relate to their basic needs. For example, when Natasha, (a student who, despite scheduling repeated attempts, did not complete the questionnaire as she was repeatedly sent home by school management) is probed for a second time on her designation of the PRU as a "baby school", she suddenly becomes more animated (as marked by the arrow symbol which signals a rising intonation) and explains that the work she is being given is not sufficiently challenging:

Natasha: It's a baby school (h).

Researcher: Ok, like what makes you think it's a babies' school

Natasha: Dunno.

Researcher: Is it the type of work that you do or would it be the way that the teachers are with you? Or what kind of- like did you think that that was-

Natasha: -We get spot the difference for work↑

Researcher: Say it again

Natasha: We get like spot the difference for work↑

Researcher: So is that too easy for ye?

Natasha: Mmm, like in my old school they used to give you spot the difference, or word searches or that when we started

Researcher: So the work that you were given made you think it's too easy for me

Natasha: Mmm hmmm

For others, the teacher's verbal communication was most frequently emphasized as problematic, with students reporting poor relations with teachers who "shout" and "nag" as Liam's example of an anger-provoking exchange with his teacher demonstrates below:



Researcher: ok, so he's a bit- how- in what way is he strict like? Like what does he]  
Liam: like say he'll proper shout at ye, spit in your face and that, not actually t-eh  
(spitting sound). Like when he talks and that, wh- he makes me feel like clocking  
him, he squares up to ye  
Researcher: squares up, ok.  
Liam: goes 'whose the big man now', he thinks that he's a big man

Interestingly, however, what is not accounted for here, and indeed, within many of the interviewees' accounts of their communications with their teachers, is the substance of the teachers' message or the original reason for the dispute. Rather, it is the style of communication which is emphasised by the students and so, as in the case above, it is the teacher's physical dominance, intrusive manner and raised voice which are deemed objectionable. Nevertheless, when considering his experiences at the Ashwick to that of his previous school, it is clear that Liam has developed a more monolithic view with respect to the teaching staff across these establishments:

Researcher: Mmm, ok, mmm are there many differences between this school and the school you were in before  
Liam: No  
Researcher: No?  
Liam: teachers still nag at me

This general view that teachers are a continuous source of annoyance perhaps explains why Liam's mean score for the *Global Needs Support* was lower than those of his peers. However, there were other occasions during the interviews when students' views could not be so clearly expressed. As Dylan's account demonstrates, there were times when articulating just what had been learnt became difficult:

Researcher: What kind of things have you learnt?  
Dylan: Learnt how to make a squid (laughter)  
Researcher: (laughter) you know how to make a squid, yeh  
Dylan: Add a bit of cotton and some pipe cleaners  
Researcher: Yeh , Oh yeh↑ you made that yesterday, that's now hanging up in our office  
Dylan: I learnt quite a bit really, but I just can't remember what it is  
Researcher: Yeh yeh  
Dylan: I mean I have learnt loads like but-

In this exchange, the discussion on learning between the interviewer and Dylan comes to a close because while Dylan states that he has learnt something by participating in the

art project, he finds it difficult to express just what it was that he learnt. Rather than focus upon the general skills he has put into practice (e.g., problem-solving, construction, design, i.e., terms that proliferate teaching and instruction discourse) or how these skills might have been facilitated by teaching staff, his focus remains upon the specifics of the task and the concrete objects needed for its completion. Exchanges such as these during the interviews serve as an important reminder that the participating students were still in the process of forming their views in relation to their teachers and were not always equipped with more abstract ideas or terminology to elaborate upon them.

Overall, it appears that, much like their general attitudes towards the Ashwick as an educational establishment, there are considerable differences between certain members of the group and sense of ambiguity in others with respect to the capacity of teachers in this environment to support their basic psychological needs.

#### **5.4.4 Experiential Orientations: Perceptions on the Role of Classroom Activities**

The analysis will now turn to participating students' interpretations of their roles in the various kinds of classroom activities they are expected to participate in on a daily basis. Following a series of comparisons between the individual students' interview data, it became clear that when they were asked about their classroom experiences at the Ashwick in general and on the art programme more specifically, the students' characterisations of classroom events and activities were rather varied. As a result, Hirschman's (1983) tripartite classificatory scheme for the different types of experiences afforded by learning activities—*aesthetic, escapist and instrumental*<sup>10</sup>—was employed in order to generate further insights over the course of the analysis.

In terms of *aesthetic* experiences, that is, experiences that Hirschman defines as having the potential to absorb one's full attention and arouse one's senses and emotions to a state of transcendence, it was in the case of Dylan that such experiences were evidently valued, as his reflection on participating in the art activities below indicates:

---

<sup>10</sup> Hirschman's original term was "*agentic*", but this was changed to "*instrumental*" for the purposes of the present research so as to retain Hirschman's original meaning but to distinguish it from the *agentic* unit of analysis presented in Chapter 7.

Dylan: If I'm on my own like and there's just a box of recycling on front of me and nobody around me, I'd just start making eh anything off the top of my head with it  
Researcher: Ok, And why- ehmm, why is it important that no-one's around? Do you prefer just to be on your own doing art  
Dylan: Yeh because ehmm most of the time it's like .3 quiet and ehm I can spread it around a bit

Researcher: what do you think this year would have been like for you, if there was none of that  
Dylan: Excuse me language but crap (h)  
Researcher: Crap, ok, ehmm, why?  
Dylan: Coz mmm it'd just be boring

As the interview extracts above indicate, for Dylan, participating in the art programme afforded him the opportunity to pursue activities that provided him with more sensory arousal than many of the other activities which occupied his time at school. Indeed, over the course of his interview, Dylan frequently refers to the experience of feeling bored at home and in school and explains that his primary concern when participating in school activities is to feel a sense of enjoyment as opposed to pleasing others. As the first extract above indicates, it is clear that he is appreciative of a quiet and solitary atmosphere in which to work, presumably because this enables him to relax and concentrate on the task at hand.

For other students, however, it was not necessarily the properties of the activities themselves that determined whether they were personally valued, rather it was whether these activities were viewed as more desirable than present alternatives.

Researcher: remember you came over to do the mask making?  
Luke: Yeh  
Researcher: How was that for you?  
Luke: Good.  
Researcher: Yeh? You liked it? Mmmm. Why do you think it was good?  
Luke: Getting out of school for the day

For students Luke, Dylan and Joshua, school was often considered a crowded place where they were confined to listening to their teachers from their chairs and for each of these pupils, opportunities to spend time doing activities outside the classroom space were particularly welcome. As the extract above demonstrates, for Luke, one of the key reasons why participating in a mask making activity was that it afforded him the opportunity to spend time away from more undesirable school spaces. Such purposeful attempts to divert ones

attention away from unpleasant states and seek temporary refuge elsewhere are categorised as *escapist* experiences by Hirschman (1983).

Finally, instead of merging with an activity (i.e., becoming absorbed in it) or escaping through an activity, for students such as Natasha and Liam, a much more *instrumental* stance is adopted whereby the processes underlying the activity are used to better enable them to deal with other, external events. In the case of Natasha, participating in school activities is contingent upon the treatment she receives from teaching staff, so that her co-operation signals a sense of mutual respect:

Natasha: If they talk like nice with you I'll do my lesson well, like proper nice and all like but like if they just stress at you-

Researcher: And what do you mean by stressing at you

Natasha: Like Greg is just like shouting, going do it now, he'll just give you something and expect you to do it. So he'll just give you something like a worksheet or something and just goes do that now

Researcher: Yeh, And you don't like that

Natasha: no

Researcher: And how do you feel like when he does that

Natasha: I dunno I just get stressed out and shout and swearing at him and that

Of course, there is no guarantee that this strategy will guarantee longer-term academic success, but, for the moment at least, it appears that this agentic approach is her preferred stance in relation to her classroom participation. While it is clear that a concern for interpersonal relations also underpin Liam's more instrumental orientation to classroom activities, it is his relations with his peers that are emphasised. Self-identifying as "the class clown" and as somebody who particularly enjoys "joking around" and "having a laugh" with his friends, Liam articulates a more pragmatic approach to school in which he negotiates between doing his school work and a more carefree existence:

Liam: I'm gonna get me eh-put me head down and do loads of work and I'll do a bit of dicking around but. I'll do the work

Like Natasha, however, there are no guarantees whether this approach will result in successful academic outcomes.

In order to conclude the presentation of the findings for this chapter, a summary profile has been constructed for each of the participating students containing details on their

psychological needs fulfilment as well as their general orientation towards school and classroom activities.

**Table 5.2: Summary Psychological Needs and Action Orientations for participating Ashwick students**

Student	Perceptions of school	Key psychological needs	Classroom orientation
Dylan	Mainstream – strongly negative Ashwick – positive	Difficulties regarding peer relations Autonomy– desires solitude at times to focus on own work/personal interests	Aesthetic experiences
Joshua	Mainstream – negative Ashwick – positive	Autonomy – feels classroom environment is constraining	Escapist experiences
Luke	Mainstream – less favourable to Ashwick Ashwick – positive	Autonomy – feels classroom environment is constraining	Escapist experiences
Liam	Mainstream – mixed but preferable to Ashwick PRU - mixed	Particularly low level of perceived competence Autonomy - feels classroom environment is constraining	Instrumental experiences
Natasha	Mainstream – negative but preferable to Ashwick Ashwick - negative	Competence – work at Ashwick perceived as unchallenging Relatedness – difficult relations with teachers are evident	Instrumental experiences

## 5.5 Discussion

The findings from the present research lend support to the emphasis within pre-existing research on PRU students' views on their educational environments, since past research (presented in Section 5.1) has typically laid emphasis upon the importance in this context of developing positive inter-personal relations and delivering suitable curricular activities. Indeed, the initial interview findings showed that amongst students' core concerns were issues such as on-going tensions with peers and overly simplistic learning tasks. In other cases, the opportunity to receive more dedicated attention from teachers in a classroom composed of a smaller group, was particularly welcome. The Ashwick SDT data also revealed substantial differences between individual students with respect to their perceived levels of competence and relatedness. In the case of competence, the interview data revealed that while some students provided a very negative evaluation of their art work, others viewed their outputs and creative process in a much more favourable light. In the case of relatedness, while most of the interviewees could quickly identify several peers that they considered as close friends and stated they were on good terms with; others revealed a distinct lack positive relations with peers, which sometimes resulted in physical violence. As the responses given during interviews were consistent with the scores obtained by these students for the basic needs questionnaire, these SDT findings highlight that the group was not homogenous in terms of their perceived levels of competence and relatedness.

This lack of homogeneity in relation to the students' perceptions of relatedness and competence is a key practical challenge faced by educators at the Ashwick, especially since in this particular context teaching staff perceive their work as caught between the competing priorities of academic performance and social and emotional well-being. Nevertheless, Reeve and Halusic (2009) have argued that since the basic psychological needs are universal and may be applied generally across a classroom of students, the instructional effort of identifying, nurturing and developing student engagement in relation to these needs does not require an intensive analysis of, or differentiated instruction for every student. However, the present findings suggest that in the context of alternative provision where more intensive remedial action is typically sought for students with a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, the kinds of practices Reeve and Halusic (2009) refer to might well be helpful. Indeed, as Ryan and Grolnick (1986) point out, from the organismic perspective of SDT, it is the functional significance or meaning of the environment to the

individual rather than the environment per se that is a key consideration. Therefore, on the basis of the present findings it suggested that it might be beneficial for staff to at least explore such meanings with their students when developing plans for their time in alternative provision. Indeed, it may well be a valuable exercise for teachers, practitioners and researchers to identify cases where students' psychological needs satisfaction is imbalanced so that unfulfilled needs can be specifically addressed and monitored over time.

Curiously, unlike perceived competence and relatedness, the issue of student autonomy was much less clear-cut, with the pilot questionnaire analysis failing to detect a distinctive autonomy construct and the Ashwick students expressing a certain degree of ambivalence around this issue. Indeed, the interview data revealed that some participating students had a simultaneous awareness of the necessity of classroom co-operation to gain vocational and social skills for future life and the constraints this sometimes placed upon the often more immediate desire to disregard the classroom rules in favour of other pursuits (e.g., socializing with peers). Findings such as these call into question the idea that the students attending the Ashwick can simply be deemed to belong to an oppositional sub-culture of students which consciously position themselves as resistant to schooling. This is an important finding given the extensive literature in the fields of sociology and social policy which has long suggested that the sub-cultures of students who find classroom climates as excessively regulatory will perceive school as a worthless institution, whose norms should be opposed (see Willis, 1977; McRobbie, 1978; Mac an Ghail, 1988; see also Howarth, 2004 for a discussion on how this notion of a resistant sub-culture of students plays out in relation to public perceptions of exclusions from school). Of course, while there is nothing to prevent students from going on to adopt such a position in the future, it appears that for the time being, an outright resistance to schooling is not being expressed by the participating students in the interviews, however difficult school staff and management might perceive their in-class behaviours.

In terms of needs support, questionnaire data suggests that students did not differentiate between competence support, autonomy support and relatedness support. Rather, teacher support was perceived at a more global level. The interview data offered further insight here. When making judgements about their teachers, interviewees often adopted a very decisive approach whereby teachers were either assigned with broadly positive traits or dismissed with strongly negative characteristics and rather generic insults. It was only upon further probing and prompting from the interviewer that some interviewees focused more

on the situational bases for their views. This suggests that participating pupils had a strong intuitive sense of whether they found their teachers supportive, but as of yet, had not refined reasons for their stances.

Such nuances would not have been discerned if only a questionnaire had been employed as is the case within much SDT research. Therefore, it is suggested that future SDT research with similar groups of young people would usefully benefit from incorporating a mixture of methods in order to present a more complete picture of students' views. It is also suggested that a developmental psychology or lifespan perspective might be brought to bear on future considerations of student perspectives since the formation of views regarding the satisfaction and support of basic needs could be conceived as ongoing processes of meaning-making. For example, according to Kegan (1982), at various stages of the lifespan, perceptions of the self are embedded in particular contexts from which the person in question is unable to gain any distance. To demonstrate, Keegan gives the example of a young child who acts on its impulses and then later understands that he or she has impulses. It is argued that a developmental psychology approach would be particularly suited to developing a deeper understanding of this ongoing process of understanding the self and others. Finally, it is suggested that evaluations of interventions that focus on the implementation of specific teacher behaviours and practices would benefit from incorporating situationally-based research methods such as classroom observations or experience sampling methods.

For the CHAT phase of the analysis, Hirschman's (1983) classificatory scheme was employed in order to identify the different ways in which classroom activities were perceived by the participating students. The interview data revealed that students had a range of different perspectives on the opportunities that tasks during lessons afforded them. Indeed, perspectives on art activities ranged from seeing them as a primary opportunity for absorption in the creative process, to seeing them more as a means of escaping more unpleasant school experiences. For others, such activities were considered as a means to achieve other personal priorities, such as gaining the respect of teachers, taking the opportunity to socialize with friends, expressing one's sense of humour or increasing academic attainment. The findings here suggest that individual students are approaching classroom activities on the basis of different mind-sets, future research efforts might usefully be directed towards considering not just the role of teaching staff in supporting students'



needs, but also, the students' own role in how they engage in classroom activities. For example, it may be that certain orientations towards classroom activities interact with situational factors (such as levels of teacher support for basic psychological needs) to influence students' levels of interest in activities, participation and effort in tasks. It might also be that the thwarting of certain psychological needs might promote certain kinds of action orientations amongst students while the support for these psychological needs might open up the way for the development of alternative orientations.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004) have expressed concern over the narrow array of methods being used by researchers in the engagement research field and, as a result, have called for richer, more detailed descriptions of classroom contexts in order to enhance our understandings of the ways in which students respond to their educational environments. The present research has attempted to make a contribution towards this lacuna in the research literature by investigating the process by which students construct meanings around how they engage in learning within an alternative educational environment. It has explored students' self-perceptions in relation to their basic psychological needs and their orientation towards classroom participation by using questionnaire and interview data. The findings revealed substantial differences between students in terms of how they generally perceive the Ashwick school environment. While some students were positively disposed to the more dedicated attention of their teachers, others held more ambivalent and negative views. The SDT findings also highlighted that the group was not homogenous in terms of their perceptions around their competence and relatedness needs. This lack of homogeneity was identified as a key practical challenge faced by educators when delivering interventions. As regards students' sense of autonomy and perceptions of their teachers' support for their basic psychological needs, it was evident that the participating students did not always have particularly well-defined views on these matters. As a consequence, it was suggested that developmental perspectives and situationally-based research methods such as classroom observations or experience sampling methods would add further insights into how these views are formed over time in relation to specific classroom events. Finally, in relation to the participating students' orientation to classroom activities, while some were drawn to activities which had the capacity to absorb their full attention and arouse their senses and emotions, others adopted a more situationally-driven orientation in which activities were

valued depending on whether they were viewed as more desirable than less pleasurable alternatives. Others still took a more instrumental approach whereby participating in the activity is used as a means to deal with other desires or external demands (e.g., gaining respect from teaching staff, gaining qualifications for a job). Therefore, because individual students at the Ashwick were approaching classroom activities on the basis of different mind-sets, it was suggested that future research efforts might usefully be directed towards considering not just the role of teaching staff in supporting students' needs, but also, the students' own role in how they engage in classroom activities.

## **5.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has investigated the process by which students construct meanings around how they engage in learning within an alternative educational environment. In terms of students' self-perceptions regarding their basic psychological needs, both questionnaire and interview data captured key differences between participants (i.e., fulfilment of relatedness and competence needs) as well as a sense of ambivalence in other areas (fulfilment of autonomy needs, teacher support, long term educational prospects). Overall, findings highlight that the group was not homogenous in terms of their perceptions of the capacity of their existing school environment to meet their basic psychological needs. However, the limitations of the basic needs questionnaire in this study suggests that any such practical use of a basic needs questionnaire would usefully benefit from a more open-ended interview process in order to capture some of the more nuanced features of students' perspectives.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Self-Determined Behaviours in the Classroom**

This chapter reports the results of a series of classroom observations which were conducted in order to permit a closer investigation of the more immediate features of day-to-day lessons at the Ashwick and to compare these with the type of activities implemented as part of the art initiative. Section 6.2 presents the rationale for analyzing classroom behaviour and verbal interactions from an SDT perspective. Section 6.3 outlines the procedures which were undertaken to develop and pilot the SDT Observation and Verbal Coding schedules. Section 6.4 sets the scene for the three observed lessons and Section 6.5 presents the findings which arose from the observational and verbal analyses. In Section 6.6 it is argued that the students observed were responding in different ways to different blends of teaching styles which were present within the three subject lessons.

#### **6.1 Introduction: Rationale for Observing Classroom Behaviour and Verbal Data from an SDT Perspective**

A teacher's ability to attend to their pupils' basic psychological needs is an important skill since the extent to which learners perceive their needs as being met has been found to predict the extent to which they engage in education which in turn predicts various outcomes such as learning and achievement (see Assor, Kaplan, Kanat-Maymon, & Roth, 2005; Black & Deci, 2000; Jang, Reeve, Ryan, & Kim, 2009; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Soenens, & Matos, 2005; Williams & Deci, 1996). Although several SDT studies have examined the role of teaching style in supporting the development of learners' sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness, typically, these rely upon individual learners' appraisals of their teachers' motivating style and classroom atmosphere (De Meyer et al, 2014). The breadth of accumulated experience that the learner can potentially draw upon here is powerful. However, the role of the learning environment in these approaches is reduced to the attitudes, beliefs and values which result from individual learners' interpretations. Given that completing questionnaires can be a particularly demanding task for some younger research participants, especially those with special educational needs, it is argued that another useful

way to measure the in-depth nuances of learning experiences amongst students is via direct observation by a non-participant observer.

Stroet, Opdenakker & Minnaert (2015) point out that while SDT research is clear in showing that positive learning outcomes accrue in classrooms that support students' perceived needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, much less is known about the multiple ways in which need supportive teaching is manifested in practice and responded to by students during lesson time. Indeed, of those SDT observational studies which have been conducted, the focus has remained confined to a limited number of SDT constructs, with the strongest area of focus being *Autonomy Support* (Jang, Reeve & Deci, 2010; Bozack, Vega, McCaslin & Good, 2008; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2015; Stroet, Opdenakker & Minnaert, 2015; Wallace & Sung, 2016). Indeed, with the exception of Haerens, Aelterman, Van den Berghe, De Meyer, Soenens, & Vansteenkistes' (2013) investigation of *Relatedness Support* and *Autonomy Support*, there remains a dearth of studies which address all three of SDT's basic psychological needs through observation. This is despite the key role assigned in SDT to dynamic integration between needs when considering them in relation to any kind of educational outcome.

Therefore, as well as considering the kinds of impact made by the art initiative within the particular context of the Ashwick, the present research also aims to contribute towards addressing the gap which has been identified in the SDT observational literature by considering the extent to which all three of the basic psychological needs were being acted upon by students, and supported by teachers. To this end, a new observational coding instrument was developed which allows classification of in-class observations according to a set of six positive and six negative indicators of self-determined behaviour amongst learners, and a set of three positive and three negative indicators of teacher support for self-determined learning. In addition to conducting live classroom observations, audio-recordings of lessons were produced in order to permit a content coding and analysis of verbatim transcripts of verbal interaction between students and teachers. The following research questions were addressed:

- (a) Do patterns of teachers' support for their students' basic psychological needs vary across the observed lessons?
- (b) Do students differ in their behaviours and patterns of participation with respect to their basic psychological needs across the three lessons?
- (c) What information do the patterns found for (a) and (b) convey about teacher-student relations across the lessons observed?

## **6.2 Methodology**

### **6.2.1 Pilot Study**

#### **The Development and Piloting of the SDT Observation and Verbal Coding schedules**

In order to commence developing the observational and verbal coding schedules, operational definitions (see Appendix G) were devised for each psychological need in accordance with the basic principles of Self-Determination Theory. In order to decide upon the actions to be targeted by each schedule, a review of pre-existing literature in the field of self-determination theory was conducted (Bozack, Vega, McCaslin & Good, 2008; Casteel, 1998; Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Gillard, & Roark, 2013; Haerens, Aelterman, Van den Berghe, De Meyer, Soenens, & Vansteenkiste, 2013; Lashari, Alias, Kesot, & Akasah, 2012; Merrett, & Wheldall, 1986; Murray, 2006; Oginsky, 2003; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008; Reeve, 2005; She, 1999; Seidel & Prenzel, 2006; Turner, Meyer, & Schweinle, 2003; Webster, Wellborn, Hunt, LaFleche, Cribbs & Lineberger, 2013). A list of potential codes for each SDT construct (i.e. relatedness, competence, autonomy, relatedness support, competence support, autonomy support) were compiled, assessed and edited with respect to the following key inclusion criteria:

1. The classes of coded behaviour should be mutually exclusive but be constituted by actions which are topographically similar in some important way.
2. The classes of coded actions should refer to observable events (i.e. speech, behaviours and actions) rather than be based upon impressionistic evaluations of the general atmosphere within the classroom.

The constructs were divided between two means of data collection (i.e., behavioural and verbal) in order to ensure that during the observations, the demands upon the researchers' concentration and working memory were maintained at manageable levels. The allocation of the SDT constructs to either the verbal or behavioural data collection schedules was based upon an assessment of the compiled pre-existing operationalisations and the extent to which these were amenable to being captured in these informational formats. An observation form was developed for recording classroom behaviours pertaining to the constructs of Relatedness Support, Relatedness and Autonomy (see Appendix I for a copy of the observation form) while the remaining SDT constructs (i.e. Autonomy Support, Competence and Competence Support) were investigated using verbal data.

### **6.2.2 The SDT Behavioural Observation Schedule**

Upon compilation and finalisation of the behavioural codes for the constructs of relatedness support, autonomy and relatedness, the observational schedule was divided into two categories to denote positive and negative classroom events from the perspective of SDT. Table 6.1 presents a summary of the operationalised constructs, classes of coded behaviours pertaining to these constructs, as well as some examples of observable events, in order to provide an overview of the manner in which the SDT observations were coded.

**Table 6.1***Summary of operationalised SDT behavioural codes*

SDT Construct	Definition	Behaviour Code	Focus of observation	Positive example	Negative Example
Relatedness Support	Providing a person with a feeling of acceptance, respect, and mutuality (Ryan & Deci, 2000).	Class organisation	Whether a teacher's organisational approach promotes or minimises relations amongst pupils	Teacher delivers learning tasks which present pupils with opportunities to talk in groups	Teacher delivers learning tasks such as those which require pupils to sit at a distance from each other and work alone
		Proximity	Whether teacher's method of instruction brings him/her into closer proximity with the pupils	Teacher circulates around the room while talking/teaching/monitoring pupils	Teacher sits a distance apart from pupils
		Gestures	Whether teacher conveys a warm, caring approach to pupils during classroom interactions	Teacher smiles, laughs	Teacher glares, frowns

**Table 6.1** *Continued*

SDT Construct	Definition	Behaviour Code	Focus of observation	Positive example	Negative Example
Relatedness	Feeling meaningfully connected to others, rather than feeling alienated or ostracized.	Proximity	How the pupils respond to classroom management and organisation	Pupils take advantage of the opportunity to talk in groups and collaborate with each other on tasks	Pupils sit at a distance from each other and work alone on tasks
		Co-operation	Whether there is a sense of acceptance, respect and reciprocity amongst members of the class	Pupil shares materials/suggestions/ideas with peers	Pupil refuses to work with peers
		Gestures	Whether there are positive relations and strong interpersonal bonds between members of the class	Pupils laughs, smiles	verbal, physical conflict between pupils
Autonomy	When people feel they are the cause of their behaviour, that is, when they feel a sense of whole-hearted volition in their choices (Deci and Ryan, 1985)	Materials freedom	whether pupils are working on more open-ended or controlled tasks	Pupils work on self-selected or self-generated project which can be completed in any number of ways.	Pupils work under conditions where the possibility of making mistakes is minimised
		In/dependent learning	Whether pupils are taking charge of their learning through a capacity for taking initiative, decision-making and independent action	Pupil looks up concept/information in book/internet	Pupil requests teacher to complete/do task



The procedures for using the observational schedule were elaborated in an instruction manual which included detailed examples (see Appendix H). This manual was presented to two assistant observers who conducted a series of practice trials to examine the robustness of the schedule's definitions. 15 video-taped lessons (ranging between 30 and 48 minutes in duration) were randomly sampled and coded from a database of eighth-grade mathematics and science lessons in seven countries which featured as part of the 1999 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 1999). The coding was conducted by alternating between each SDT concept at 3-minute intervals and recording frequencies for various pre-determined sets of positive and negative behaviours. The observational schedule detailed codes for the various indicators selected for each of these three aspects of instruction and the rating sheet was constructed in a bipolar format so as to allow space for the observer to enter codes for positive indicators on the right hand side of the rating sheet and negative indicators on the left hand side of the rating sheet (for an example of this layout, see Figure 6.1).

**Figure 6.1**

*Sample Extract from Observational Rating Sheet*

Relatedness Support									
Class Organization						Proximity		Gestures	
+					-	+	-	+	-
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				

The observations were conducted by alternating between operationalised constructs at 3 minute intervals. Scores for each of the three areas of instruction pertaining to relatedness support were calculated as aggregates of behaviours observed at 5 different time points over the duration of the 45-minute observation. The frequencies for each psychological need were then aggregated for the duration of the observation and used to compute ratios of positive to negative behaviours for each lesson. Following this schedule refinement stage, 5 live-lesson trials were conducted in a Year 9 classroom in the North-West of England in order

to assess levels of agreement between the behavioural ratings recorded by the observer and a pre-existing instrument designed to assess SDT constructs by drawing upon the observers general impressions of the classroom environment.

### **Results of schedule pilot**

Inter-rater reliability was calculated using intra-class correlation coefficients (ICC) which were based upon the frequencies of behaviours observed for each item by each rater in each live classroom session. ICC values were 0.71 (all  $p < .05$ ) or above for all but two schedule items. The first of the items scoring a lower ICC value was Co-operation (ICC = 0.62) which is considered a “substantial” level of agreement in Landis and Koch’s (1977) characterisation of reliability coefficients. Therefore this indicator was retained for the purposes of the current analysis. However, because the Relatedness indicator of Proximity (ICC = 0.12) did not produce an acceptable level of inter-rater agreement, it was eliminated as an indicator from further analyses.

### **6.2.3 The Development of a Coding Schedule for the Verbal Data**

Upon completing the classroom observation data collection, the audio-recordings from the three target lessons were transcribed (a total of 3x45 minutes of audible interaction between teachers and students). Because the meanings of utterances are profoundly shaped by the way in which something is said rather than just the content of what was said, the Jefferson transcription system was employed in an effort to capture some of the more nuanced features of talk such as emphasis, speed, tone of voice, timing and pauses but these elements can be crucial for interpreting data. For the present analysis, a selection of the most widely-used notation symbols were employed from the Jefferson system (see Appendix C for details on notation symbols used). Individual students and members of the teaching staff participating in the observed lessons were identified by pseudonyms and contextual information about the lesson was added where this was deemed helpful for the transcriber to interpret recordings (e.g., to understand why there were periods of silence as students worked etc.).

Unlike the ephemeral nature of live classroom observations, the recorded lessons could be analysed as frequently as necessary in order attend to their different features. Therefore,

the texts were coded in multiple stages to take advantage of various different coding strategies. In the initial stages of the analysis, the transcribed text was segmented according to a number of its macro-features (i.e., patterns of interaction beyond sentence level) including the number of words produced by each participant, the on-going events at each stage of the lesson as well as the types of interaction occurring at these stages (e.g., dyadic teacher-to-student, dyadic peer-to-peer, group-level peer interaction etc.). Following this, a more open-ended style of coding was undertaken in order to search across the dataset to find patterns of verbal exchanges which could be tentatively considered to relate to the SDT constructs of *competence*, *competence support* and *autonomy*. Extracts of data coded in this manner were then reviewed to consider how they might combine to form a number of overarching themes residing within each construct. This involved an iterative process of analysing and re-analysing the extracts in order to identify verbal behaviours and interactions which had been previously aligned in the research literature with the SDT constructs under investigation. A summary of the operationalised constructs, classes of coded verbal behaviours pertaining to these constructs as well as some examples of observable speech acts are presented in Table 6.2 below in order to provide an overview of the manner in which the SDT observations were coded.

Table 6.2

*Overview of operationalisation of SDT constructs for coding*

SDT Construct	Definition	Discourse Code	Focus of observation	Positive example	Negative Example
Autonomy Support	In a school context this involves finding ways to increase pupils' capacity to be self-initiating and to nurture their personally-derived intentions to explore and learn.	Control	Whether the T finds ways to increase Ss' self-capacity to explore and learn or pressurizes Ss to work in a prescribed manner	T demonstrates possibilities but moves decision-making to Ss	T rejects/dismisses pupils suggestions regarding the form and structure of activities/content/tasks
		Authority	Whether the basis of the T's authority is legitimised or whether he/she relies on his/her position of power	T provides rationale for request/ task/activity	T uses controlling language when giving commands (i.e. using modal verbs such as have to/'must' without rationale for instructions)
		Perspective	Whether T conveys emotional support/ empathy for pupils	T acknowledges and accepts student expressions of negative affect as valid reaction to constraints	T prescribes how pupils should feel and think

*Note: T = Teacher, S = Student*

Table 6.2 *Continued*

SDT Construct	Definition	Discourse Code	Focus of observation	Positive example	Negative Example
Competence	Competence involves feeling efficient, effective, and even masterful in one's behaviour	Cognition	Whether Ss convey their cognitive capabilities/make cognitive efforts during instruction/learning tasks	S demonstrates understanding by explaining, paraphrasing, or interpreting information	S is non-responsive when asked questions or about goals/aims/interests
		Self-evaluation	Whether Ss perceive their efforts in a positive/negative light	S makes a positive evaluation of own work e.g. admires quality of work of own work	S makes negative claims with regard to subject ability
		Assistance	Whether students seek assistance in an effort to develop skills/master lesson content	S asks T /other Ss for assistance with tasks /learning/enquires/seek explanations	S refuses offers of help when encountering difficulties
Competence Support	Supporting competence means conveying confidence in a person's ability to surmount challenges and helping others to feel effective in their actions.	Instruction	Whether T's emphasis is on helping pupils master lesson content or on performance and completion of work	T asks students to articulate solution paths or rationales for their approaches	T attributes pupil errors to a lack of ability, claims that S failure is due to low ability rather than a lack of perseverance/strategies
		Evaluation	Whether T's response to pupils' work/contribution/efforts is constructive	T emphasises that mistakes are a natural part of learning process	Verbal criticism of S errors/lack of progress, effort, persistence without offering strategies for skill/performance improvement

*Note: T = Teacher, S = Student*

As Table 6.2 demonstrates, special attention was paid to the functional relations between the semantic, pragmatic or rhetorical elements of the participants' talk and the social context of the classroom so that the participants' talk was not merely considered to be a reflection of mental events, but rather, was seen as a means to achieve goals in a socially meaningful world. The advantage of adopting this approach is that it simultaneously emphasises that language is *actively* used by participants in classroom situations and exists as a *flexible* resource from which they can accomplish social actions. Thus, this approach lends itself particularly well to identifying distinct linguistic entities that are orientated towards particular forms of social action while at the same time recognising that language is a dynamic and malleable communicative form that can undergo a number of transformations when being put into practice (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The importance ascribed to particular findings in the analysis are then made more "transparent" by elaborating the linguistic structure of interactions and demonstrating the grammatical devices used to serve particular social functions (Wood and Kroger, 2000).

### **6.3 Findings**

#### **6.3.1 An introduction to the observed lessons**

Three lessons were observed for a period of 53 minutes each between late June and early July 2014. Verbal assent was obtained from all participating staff and students for the researcher to observe and make an audio recording of the lesson. Overall, six KS3 students (aged 13-14), two teaching assistants, two teachers and one artist participated in the observed lessons. Originally, the aim was to observe lessons in core subjects (i.e., English, mathematics and science) and compare these with an art project session, however, by the time the observations were scheduled to take place, the KS3 teacher who taught the core curriculum subjects to the group had suddenly departed due to ill health and in the wake of a heated dispute with management. As a result, the KS3 group were assigned a new teacher, Sandra, who had specialised in GCSE mathematics but was required to act as a substitute for her departed colleague by teaching beyond this area of expertise. As a result, observations of lessons in engineering and information and communications technology (ICT) were conducted in addition to a mask-making workshop with a local artist which was delivered as part of the art initiative at the centre of the current research.

### *The Art Lesson*

The mask-making workshop, which took part in a large classroom over two hours, was the first scheduled observation. The session was developed and facilitated by a professional illustrator who had previously worked for several years as a primary school teacher and had worked on a previous occasion with some Ashwick students at the local art gallery (for artist details see Table 4.1). The workshop was attended by two KS3 students, Liam and Luke (for participant details see Table 5.1.) who were accompanied by two experienced teaching assistants who worked full-time at the Ashwick. During a planning consultation meeting, the visiting artist, Cathy, was informed that the KS3 group had recently visited an aquarium, had created papier maché fish sculptures and had been learning about Brazil in anticipation of the World Cup celebrations. Consequently, it was suggested that an art project be delivered around the creation of Fish Head ceremonial masks which are used by dancers during ritual celebrations within indigenous groups in Brazil. During this session, the participating students designed, cut out and constructed large masks using corrugated card and newsprint. These were then decorated by blending highly pigmented wax pastels with cooking oil (See Figure 6.1 for photographs taken during the session).

*Figure 6.2 Mask-Making in the art lesson*



### *The ICT Lesson*

The second observation was conducted eleven days later during the KS3 group's ICT lesson with Sandra (see Table 5.1 for teacher details ). It was attended by three male KS3 students, denoted by the pseudonyms "Rhys", "Dylan" and "Max", as well as "Tracey", a female teaching assistant. While Dylan had been attending the Ashwick on an intermittent basis over the course of the school year (see Table 5.1 for student details), both Rhys and Max had only arrived at the centre days before the observation was conducted. Rhys was already familiar with the centre having been referred to the Ashwick in the previous school year following a temporary exclusion from mainstream school. This time he had received another fixed term exclusion from his school due to breaching the rules against smoking. Max had been referred to the Ashwick centre due to concerns over his social withdrawal during lessons (which included failure to make eye contact, speak as well as a refusal to read and write) and his low levels of academic attainment. The lesson observed was developed around the theme of ancient Egypt and students were required to develop a presentation slideshow containing text and images around a personally chosen aspect of life in ancient Egypt. In order to introduce the topic of ancient Egypt to the students, Sandra presented the group with a detailed illustration depicting a section plan of a large ancient Egyptian dwelling. Along with various photographs of historical artefacts, this illustration was used by Sandra to outline various features of everyday living in Ancient Egypt. Sandra then set the students the presentation project by firstly explaining the scope and requirements of the task and then circulated the classroom asking questions and guiding students when they had questions. At this stage of the lesson, Tracey, sat alongside Dylan to assist him with typing and periodically attempted to encourage Max to make an attempt at the task by suggesting approaches he could adopt when conducting internet research.

### *The Engineering Lesson*

The final observation of an Engineering lesson was conducted nine days after the ICT class observation. It was attended by three male KS3 students, denoted by the pseudonyms "Rhys", "Max", and "Matt", as well as two female teaching assistants, "Tracey", the female teaching assistant who supported students in the ICT class above, and "Liz", a female higher-level teaching assistant who also specialises in the school's nurture provision. Like Rhys and Max, Matt was also a new arrival at the Ashwick centre, having been referred there from his



mainstream school following an escalation in conflictual relations with two of his peers. The lesson observed was delivered by “Michelle” an Engineering teacher who worked at the school along with several others in the region on the part-time basis. The lesson centred around the energy and forces elements within the subject curriculum and involved students building, adapting and launching their own rockets (see Figure 6.2 for photographs taken during the engineering lesson). The participating students were firstly given cardboard tubes, foam nose cones, adhesive tape, decorative stickers and card from which to construct a small model-sized rocket. Following this, Michelle, Tracey and Liz accompanied the students to the basketball court on the school grounds outside and the students undertook two types of rocket launches using air pressure. For the first launch, students attached their models to the rims of unsealed plastic bottles and then jumped on the main body of these bottles so that the air they contained was forced into the cardboard tubes at the centre of the model rockets, thus launching them into the air. For the second launch, the students used a valve to connect their rockets to a piston-operated pump and used an air pressure gauge to monitor levels of air pressure being delivered to rocket. When the desired level of air pressure was reached, the student then launched the rocket by releasing the valve.

*Figure 6.3 Model rocket construction and launching activity in the Engineering lesson*



### 6.3.2 Teacher Support Behavioural Analysis

In this section, all quantitative findings are adjusted to take account of the different ratios of teacher to students in each lesson: 1:3 in ICT, 1:3 in engineering and 1:1.5 in art as the second student was only present for half of the lesson.

#### *Relatedness Support*

To investigate the manner in which teachers attempted to foster a feelings of respect amongst students and develop inter-personal connections in the classroom, three specific aspects of the participating teachers' classroom behaviours were examined: their organization of classroom activities, their physical gestures whilst teaching and interacting with students and their levels of proximity with students.

Comparing the organisation of the lessons across the three subject lessons, it was found that while students in ICT and engineering spent 80% and 92% of the observed time participating in solitary tasks, the entire art session involved students collaborating with the visiting artist. Therefore, although for the majority of the art lesson, only one student participated in the mask-making activity, the artist who facilitated the lesson adopted a more hands-on approach, assisting the pupil with certain elements of the production as well as involving the teaching assistant in the same end. Therefore, while the task of making a mask was distributed across three individuals in the art lesson, in the engineering lesson, the task of constructing a model rocket and the ICT presentation task were designated as tasks for individual pupil completion.

Regarding the levels of proximity between teachers and pupils during the three lessons, the observations revealed that there were similar levels of proximity between teachers and students in the art and engineering sessions. The engineering teacher circulated the classroom regularly to attend to pupils while the artist sat alongside the pupils in order to provide continuous assistance. In the ICT lesson, however, the teacher remained at the front of the classroom next to the projector in the initial stages of the lesson and sat some distance behind the students as they used the school's computers to search for presentation images. While it would be mistaken to assume that such actions might somehow suppress the students need for relatedness (in fact, one might argue that it minimises intrusion of the

teacher into peer relations), it is nevertheless, teacher-student interaction is reliant on the willingness of students to summons the teacher's attention should they wish to initiate further dialogue. Given the physical distance between these students and their ICT teacher, it is perhaps unsurprising then, that teacher-gestures conveying a sense of warmth and positivity (i.e., smiles, laughs) were more frequent in the art and engineering lessons (see Table 6.4). In addition, we see in all three lessons, an almost complete absence of any of the teacher gestures targeted within the observation schedule (i.e., frowns, glares) which might convey a sense of dissatisfaction with the ongoing classroom relations.

**Table 6.3**

*Frequency of observed indicators of proximity across lessons*

Proximity	ICT	Art	Engineering
<i>Positive</i>			
Individual help (average per pupil)	2.3	11	6
Teacher Circulates	3	0	5
<i>Negative</i>			
Teacher at front of classroom	2	0	1
Teacher seated at a distance from pupils	2	0	0
Proximity Total	1.3	11	10

**Table 6.4**

*Frequency of observed non-verbal gestures across lessons*

<b>Gestures</b> (average per pupil)			
<i>Positive</i>			
Smile	2	1.2	2
Mirror	0.5	1.2	0
Laugh	0	1.6	4
Other - pat on shoulder	0	0	0.4
<i>Negative</i>			
Frown	0	0	0.4
Glare	0	0	0
Gestures Total	2.5	4	6

### *Competence Support*

To investigate the manner in which teachers attempt to assist students in understanding and mastering the assigned learning tasks as well as the manner in which they attempt to nurture feelings of efficiency and effectiveness within their pupils, two specific aspects of the participating teachers' verbal instruction were examined: the kinds of knowledge conveyed by teaching staff over the course of their lessons and the manner in which praise is communicated to pupils. In the ICT lesson, the focus is on declarative forms of knowledge, as Sandra presents various factual details on life in Ancient Egypt to the students:

Sandra: so that water would have been piped in, right there, down, water pipes, they were very very clever . Ehmm. Which goes back to the theory, some people think that they kinda - some higher power that they listened to, that showed them this kind of stuff.

In the engineering lesson, however, we see an emphasis upon procedural knowledge as Michelle guides the pupils through the various stages involved in constructing a model rocket, pointing out the alternatives and options that students may choose between as they construct:

Michelle: right, all you need to do, this is dead easy, cut round them, fold them into half, then back them with the chequered bit and stick it on, you can have as many as you want, as few as you want and put them wherever you want

In the art lesson, however, the predominant form of instruction was more implicit as the artist frequently employed a first-person narrative to convey her rationales for creative decisions:

Artist: RIGHT ok so, I like this card because if you choose this white side or if you use the brown side, I like the brown side because it's a bit like wood so the masks that we make look a little bit like they've been made of wood made of wood

Beyond communicating pre-existing declarative knowledge and conveying procedural knowledge by providing detailed instructions and options in discrete stages, the artist adopts a more authorial role, explaining her design considerations and thought process as she works with the pupils to create their own unique versions of the tribal masks she has demonstrated to them. The challenge for the students here is whether they too will base their creative decisions upon similar processes of deliberation.

In terms of the praise offered by the observed teaching staff, there were subtle differences between practitioners with respect to the focus of their commendations. In the ICT lesson, teaching staff tended to offer praise by assigning broadly positive attributes (“brilliant”, “good”, “better”, “very, very good”) to the students’ work, but on occasion, their praise was focused upon an individual student’s capabilities:

Sandra: you’re good at this aren’t you?  
Tracey: he’s brilliant at powerpoint

If effective, such positive teacher evaluations could have a constructive emotional effect on the pupil in question and as such, might serve to strengthen the pupil-teacher relationship. However, the types of praise used by teachers could have a number of other functions. For example, Michelle’s praise below also acts as a form of encouragement to pupils to persist with the task until its completion:

Michelle: Getting there, you’re doing well there Matt

Indeed, over the course of the Engineering lesson, praise tended to centre on task processes and procedures as Michelle focused her feedback upon the pupils’ efforts, accuracy and persistence while they constructed their model rockets. While the artist also deployed this particular form of praise, she also frequently offered more elaborate forms of positive feedback whereby the technical details and material properties of the pupils’ creations are brought into focus:

Artist: Now I’m looking at that upside down and kind of like the idea that- it’s a really interesting shape you’ve made there, it’s almost like batman looking isn’t it, can you see it?

In order to consider these different forms of praise (outcome-focused, process-focused and skill-focused) from a more global perspective, Table 6.5 presents the frequency in which they were found across the three lessons. Indeed, from the results presented in Table 6.5, we see that praise, of all kinds, most frequently occurred in the art session

Table 6.5

*Frequency of different forms of praise across lessons*

Praise Form (average per pupil)	ICT	Art	Engineering
Outcome	2.33	8	6
Skill/ability	1	.5	0
Progress	1	3	2.67
Total	4.33	11.5	4.67

### *Autonomy Support*

In order to explore the manner in which teaching staff attempted to nurture their pupils' capacity to explore and take initiative when learning, two specific aspects of the participating teachers' verbal instruction were examined: the manner in which the teachers issued directives to students and the manner in which they attempted to assist students with their work. In relation to teaching directives, of particular interest here is whether the basis of the teacher's authority is legitimised in any way or whether he/she relies on his/her position of power when instructing students.

Interestingly, different verbal styles for issuing directives emerged within each of the three subject lessons. In engineering, while direct commands were frequently issued to students (i.e., students were told in no uncertain terms to adopt/not to adopt a certain course of action), the potential for these commands to be interpreted as overly controlling is often minimized with the incorporation of polite expressions:

Michelle: Don't launch it yet Matt-please.

In the ICT lesson, directives were rarely issued as commands, but instead tended to take the form of proposals with the teacher elaborating upon what she sees as the most desirable state of affairs:

Sandra: ok: what I'd like you to do, is to log on the computer, I want you to start....

By issuing directives in this manner, the instruction acts less like a command obliging the student to take a certain course of action, and instead, acts more like a moral appeal for students to bring a desired state of affairs into actuality. In the art lesson, however, neither politeness nor appeals to the individual desires of the artist were typically employed when directing pupils. Instead, direct commands are frequently issued but it is important to note that these tended to appear alongside proposals to collaborate:

Artist: Finish this colouring and then we'll attach them. I think we'll shape it and attach it to a headband

Interestingly, because the artist and the teaching assistant work with the pupils *as they construct* their masks, the deployment for social niceties (e.g., requests using "please", "thank you" and more indirect, self-referential language such as "I would like you to carry

out this task”) to temper commands (commands which might otherwise be interpreted as indicative of an authoritarian classroom climate), do not seem necessary while the artist is alternating between her roles as mentor and co-creator.

In order to gain a more global appreciation of the extent to which these different verbal forms for issuing directives were employed in each of the lessons, the frequencies for each form (i.e., direct command, rationalised command, desired state or action, polite request) are summarised in Table 6.6 below. As this summary data shows, the ICT teacher issued the least direct commands in favour of using more elaborate, indirect and polite linguistic forms. In contrast, direct commands are issued more readily in the art and engineering lessons; however, in both cases, this was offset by the provision of rationales for certain courses of action and the deployment of polite language when making student requests.

**Table 6.6**  
*Autonomy Support Behavioural Indicators -Average Per Pupil*

	Art	ICT	Engineering
Direct command	7	1	5.67
Rationalised Command	6	2	2
Desired state/action	0	2	0
Polite Request	0	0.67	2.67
Total	-1	3.67	-1.67

Beyond the issues of providing pupil with instruction and maintaining classroom control, fostering autonomy in an educational context also involves creating opportunities for pupils to take initiative and work in their own way. The manner in which teaching staff frame their attempts to provide assistance for pupils is revealing here since there are a number of different levels on which this aim can be achieved. For example, this can involve nurturing students’ technical abilities so that they can undertake specific tasks, but it can also involve fostering students’ psychological independence and levels of motivation so that they take more responsibility for their own learning. Beyond this, fostering student autonomy can also have a more critical and political dimension since it can involve developing an awareness among students of various issues of power and control as wielded by certain sectors of society which may serve to place constraints upon their learning and development (see Benson, 1997 on the differences between technical, psychological and political dimensions of autonomy).

In the ICT class the teacher adopts a more hands-off approach during the lesson, assigning the task and monitoring student progress from a distance:

Sandra: I'm gonna leave you guys to it, but if you need any help, please do ask, don't just sit there going ahhh! I dunno what I'm doing

Underpinning this approach is the assumption that the students are motivated to work independently on the task, that they have developed sufficient levels of computer expertise to create a presentation using the provided software and that should they require any help that they will approach the teacher for advice. In contrast, the engineering teacher adopts a more hands-on approach when providing assistance as evidenced by the levels of her classroom circulation and provision of assistance to individual students in the behavioural data outlined above (see Table 6.3). However, because the core task involved students competing against each other when launching their model rockets, her attempt to provide assistance to students was, occasionally, a more fraught process. For example, when Rhys is experiencing difficulties in keeping his model rocket intact, he becomes very frustrated when he discovers a breakage and he begins to swear and accuse the teacher of deliberately causing damage to his model:

Rhys: you did it on purpose!  
Michelle: I did not: do that on purpose Rhys, I wouldn't do that to you  
Liz: it works. Woooo!  
Michelle: I'll get it back on again. (.3) ok?  
Rhys: yeah well now that you've done it, it's not mine: is it "to release"  
Liz: Rhys!  
Michelle: so you get the bit in it on that then. so. if you want you can tape it a little bit. Do you want to tape it just to keep it secure? I'll leave it with you

In attempting to diffuse her pupil's anger, Michelle reassures Rhys that she would not deliberately damage a pupil's work and then offers to make the necessary repair for the student. Interestingly, Rhys resists this offer asserting that this will diminish his status as the originator of the model. As a result, in an attempt to restore his sense of autonomy, Michelle returns the model rocket to her student and instead suggests how it could be repaired.

During the art lesson, the facilitating artist experiences quite the opposite problem as rather than assert his status as an autonomous creative student, Luke spontaneously requests whether the artist would be willing to draw him a picture of a motorbike. Rather than simply accepting or rejecting this request, the artist instead offers to demonstrate a technique to Luke in order to provide him with the expertise to produce his own drawing:



Artist: A motorbike, oh! I'm not sure about that, I could show you a trick and you could do your own, if you find a picture of a motorbike in one of the newspapers or car or something, I'll show you a trick, that- where you can learn how to do it yourself.

In these three examples then, we see that the teaching staff attempt to foster pupil autonomy in a number of different ways, each of which stems from the nature of the ongoing learning task. Thus while, from the outset, Sandra grants her students more psychological freedom in order to complete an individual presentation task, Michelle continuously alternates between guiding her students on the necessary procedures to construct a model rocket whilst also granting them certain freedoms and choices during the process of construction. For the visiting artist, however, the focus upon collaboration and the more technical elements of creative tasks allow her temporarily sidestep the stark choice that teaching staff sometimes face between granting psychological freedom and de-escalating tensions to maintain classroom control. We see in both of these examples that student autonomy is not something which is simply given over by the teacher to the students in the form of free choices and independent action, rather, it is carefully negotiated as teachers attempt to decipher between situations when providing assistance is likely to be beneficial for students' learning, and situations where such assistance is likely to be considered as domineering and thus generate conflict.

### **6.3.3 Needs Supportive Teacher Behaviours: Key Findings**

The present research analysis aimed to gain a more in-depth understanding of how needs-supportive teaching might vary in practice. More specifically, verbal and behavioural data were examined to compare teachers' attempts at the Ashwick to support their students' basic psychological needs across three different lessons, two of the school's regular timetabled lessons -engineering and ICT – as well as a mask-making workshop which was delivered as part of the present arts-based initiative. The analysis revealed a certain set of similarities as well as some clear differences between teachers in their attempts to support all three of the basic psychological needs. In terms of similarities, the analysis revealed that the art and engineering teachers were united by similar levels of proximity to students and positive behavioural gestures when teaching. They also shared an emphasis upon conveying procedural knowledge, praising student progress, instructing with direct commands and providing more "hands on" assistance when delivering their lessons. The ICT lesson,

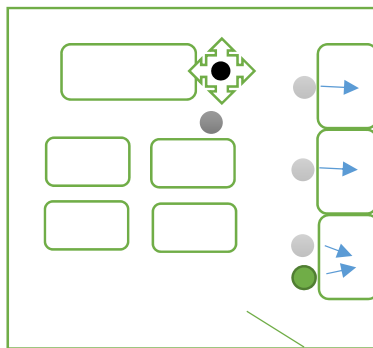
however, was more readily distinguishable by the teacher's lower levels of proximity to students', less frequent use of positive behavioural gestures (i.e., smiles, nods etc.) and focus on conveying declarative knowledge (i.e., factual details on life in Ancient Egypt). In addition, unlike the art and engineering lessons, praise was focused around task outcomes and student attributes while instructions were typically offered via a more open-ended process of suggestion-giving. Although the art and engineering lessons shared several features in common, especially when compared to the ICT lesson, the analysis also revealed a number of more subtle differences between them. Indeed, it was found that while both the art and engineering teachers shared an emphasis upon conveying procedural forms of knowledge, focused their praise upon task processes and made more usage of direct commands when teaching, different modes were adopted by each teacher when communicating these elements. While the ICT teacher provided students with detailed instructions in discrete stages, moderated direct commands with polite expressions and focused feedback upon the pupils' efforts; the art teacher adopted a more authorial role during her lesson, explaining her thought process as she worked alongside the pupils, framing direct commands within more collaborative endeavours and offering praise in more elaborated forms by focusing on the technical details of the students' designs.

#### **6.3.4 Student Needs Satisfaction: Self-Determined Behaviours in the classroom**

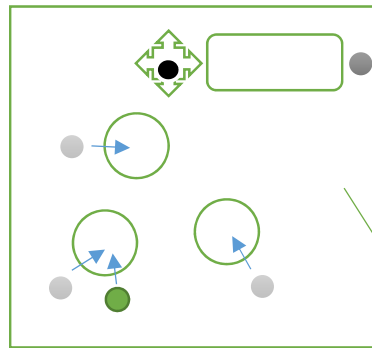
##### **Pupil Relatedness**

To consider the ways in which students might establish connections with peers and demonstrate a sense of belongingness in the classroom, four specific aspects of their behaviours were examined: levels of proximity between students, the distribution of their talk, behavioural gestures and instances of co-operation. Figure 6.3 below depicts an elevation view of the seating arrangements for each of the three lessons and show that while the pupils in the ICT class sat in closest proximity, because each pupil worked on a separate computer for the majority of the lesson, the potential for interaction between students was somewhat limited. In the art lesson, however, the teaching assistant, artist and pupil had a shared object of interest (i.e., the mask) which necessitated more extensive interaction between them in order to co-ordinate their efforts to arrive at a finished piece. Although the students in the engineering lesson were set an individual task, because the seating arrangement permitted all students to see each other as they worked, this created a classroom climate more conducive to social interaction between students.

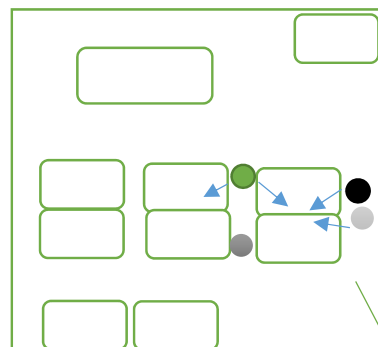
**Figure 6.4: Classroom Organisation: Seating arrangement and participants' activity focus**



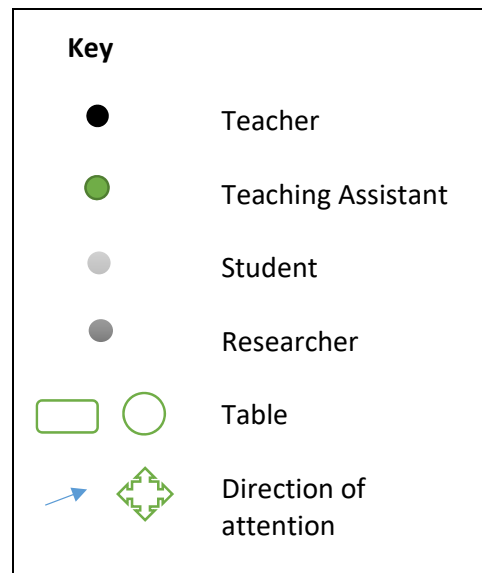
**ICT lesson**



**Engineering lesson**



**Art Lesson**



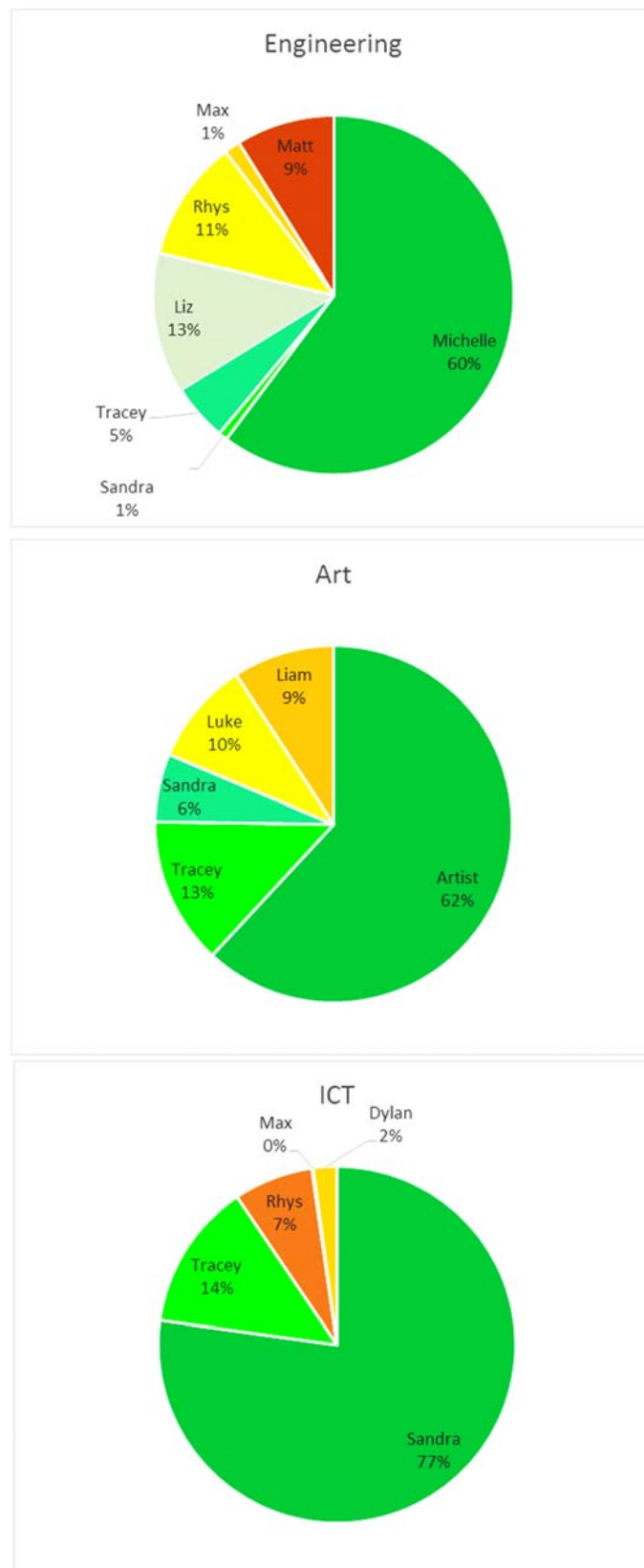
In order to assess the distribution of talk between teaching staff and pupils during the sampled lessons, word counts of the verbal data transcribed for each participant were conducted using word processing software<sup>11</sup>. As the findings presented in Figure 6.4 indicate, while the distribution of talk was similar in the art and engineering sessions, with the teaching staff making 81% and 79% of the verbal contributions respectively, the rate of teacher talk was somewhat higher in the ICT lesson, with 91% of the verbal contributions being made by teaching staff. In fact, one pupil remained almost completely silent for the duration of the observed lesson, despite staff making repeated attempts to elicit verbal contributions from him.

Table 6.7 presents frequencies of observed instances of student co-operation and a range of behavioural gestures. As the results here demonstrate, there is a notable difference in the rates of pupil co-operation and positive gestures between those partaking in the ICT lesson when compared to those partaking in the Art and engineering lessons, with more frequent instances of students sharing, working together, helping, as well as smiling and laughing in the latter lessons. In fact, in the ICT lesson there were instances in which one pupil in particular, refused to work alongside his peers and, as the pupil gestures data in Table 6.8 indicates, the student in question chose instead to isolate himself from his teachers and peers by resting his head in his arms upon his desk thus avoiding any eye contact and/or verbal communication with his teachers and peers for the majority of the lesson. Overall, however, these lower levels of positive behavioural gestures, verbal contributions and co-operation between pupils during the ICT behavioural observation are consistent with the lower level of student talk during this lesson.

---

<sup>11</sup> Word counts for participants were retrieved by highlighting the dialogue produced by each individual across the entire transcribed lesson and obtaining the automatic word produced by Microsoft Word.

Figure 6.5: Distribution of Talk between lesson participants



**Table 6.7****Frequency of observed co-operation amongst students**

<b>Pupil Co-operation</b> (average per student)	<b>ICT</b>	<b>Art</b>	<b>Engineering</b>
Pupil shares materials/thoughts/ideas	1.33	2	0
Pupil works with others	0	2	2
Pupil helps others	0	0	2
Pupil refuses/declines to share materials/thoughts/ideas with others	1	0	0
Pupil refuses to work with others	.33	0	0
Pupil refuses to help others	1.67	0	0
Total	-1.67	4	4

**Table 6.8****Frequency of observed non-verbal gestures amongst students**

<b>Pupil Gestures</b> (average per pupil)	<b>ICT</b>	<b>Art</b>	<b>Engineering</b>
Smile	.33	1.33	1
Laugh	.33	1.33	1.33
Other	0	0	0
Frown	0	0	0
Other –rests head in arms/on desk	.67	0	.67
Gestures Total	-0.01	2.66	1.66

***Pupil Autonomy***

Levels of autonomous learning behaviours amongst students were compared across the three sampled lessons by considering the extent to which students could freely work with classroom resources and their levels of initiative when learning. As the engineering and ICT lessons involved students working on individual tasks for almost the entire duration of the lesson, the students had almost complete levels of freedom to work with the materials provided in any manner which they chose (i.e., using the internet in ICT and a range of craft materials and tools to construct model rockets in engineering). In the art session however, the observation revealed that for 20% of the sampled time, the artist provided a materials demonstration and explanation about the particular properties of the materials provided, before distributing them to pupils to work with. Interestingly, as the results in Table 6.9 indicate, more help-seeking and independent working were observed in the ICT lesson than in either the art or engineering lesson. Nevertheless, at no point during the sampled time frames, do we witness any student request a peer or member of the teaching staff to complete a learning task on their behalf. Therefore, although less instances of students

taking initiative were found in the art and engineering lessons when compared with ICT, the observations failed to detect any indications of a student dependency on staff or peers in order to complete learning tasks.

Table 6.9

*Frequency of observed autonomous learning behaviours*

<b>Learning Approach</b> (average per pupil)	<b>ICT</b>	<b>Art</b>	<b>Engineering</b>
Pupil seeks help	1	.75	.67
Pupil does additional independent work	2.33	.75	0
Pupil requests others to do task	0	0	0
Total	3.33	1.50	.67

**Competence**

In order to consider whether students were directing their efforts towards mastering the tasks they were given and increasing their learning, two particular aspects of their classroom verbalisations were considered: the types of questions they asked and the character of their self-evaluations. At a very basic level, questions posed by pupils indicate that they are thinking about classroom events and are contributing to the lesson in some way. Nevertheless, as Table 6.10 demonstrates, the kinds of questions asked by students varied considerably between the three lessons. In the ICT lesson, the overwhelming majority of questions were posed in order to seek declarative knowledge from the teacher and indeed, the prevalence of this type of question corresponds to the emphasis within the lesson upon factual details about life in ancient Egypt. In the engineering and art lessons, however, we see a much greater variety of question types with questions seeking procedural knowledge and permission to take certain courses of action being most frequent in engineering. Again, the higher frequency of these particular types of questions align with the emphasis in this lesson upon accuracy when following instructions in order to construct and launch a model rocket. In the art lesson, a similar level of variation was found between the functions of the pupils' questions, with those seeking procedural knowledge, clarifications and rationales being posed most frequently. Indeed, the prevalence of questions seeking procedural knowledge and rationales (e.g. for selecting certain materials and tools when constructing) is reflective of the emphasis upon more considered bases for decisions when creating. Interestingly, however, it was only in the art session where questions actively seeking staff feedback were found. In fact, both participating students asked the artist for her opinion on their creative efforts. On one level, it could be said that by inviting the artist to evaluate, the

students are co-operating with their questions functioning as a means of checking whether she is satisfied with their contribution to their co-produced work. Another possible interpretation is that inviting the artist's opinion affords the students the opportunity to receive further instruction and guidance should any changes be recommended and in this way, provides an additional opportunity for learning. In either case, however, it is argued that the active seeking of feedback from the artist during the art lesson signals a degree of esteem for the artist on the behalf of the participating students.

Table 6.10

*Frequency of Different Question Forms Amongst Students*

	ICT	Engineering	Art
Seeking procedural knowledge	0.33	1.33	1.5
Seeking declarative knowledge	5.67	1	1
Seeking a rationale	0	.67	1.5
Seeking feedback	0	0	1
Seeking permission	0	2	0
Seeking clarification	0	.33	1.5
Non-interrogative	.33	.33	0
Request	0	0	1
Challenging teacher	0	.67	0
Total	6.33	6.33	7.5

In addition to the types of questions posed by pupils, the analysis also focused upon the manner in which they evaluated their own efforts and outputs during the observed lessons. In order to examine the characteristics of pupils' self-evaluations, the analysis considered whether pupils evaluate their work using positive or negative attributions and whether they focus on internal factors (e.g, their personal capacity or efforts) or external factors (e.g., the materials or tools used, working conditions) during this appraisal process. A considerable degree of variation was found across all three of the observed lessons, between the extent to which pupils evaluated their efforts as well as the manner in which they did this. In the ICT lesson, pupil evaluations of their work on the presentation task were rare. In fact, neither Dylan nor Max offered any kind of verbal commentary on the character of their work and although Rhys' evaluation of his pre-existing knowledge on the topic assigned for the presentation task was positive, this did not serve to increase his motivation to persist with the presentation task. Indeed, within a matter of minutes of working independently on the classroom computers, Sandra observed that instead of conducting research, he was playing computer games and so she decided to confront him:



Sandra: you're not playing any games Rhys. I'm happy for you watch this video  
Rhys: I already know loads about it

While Rhys subsequently returned to the assigned task, less than 30 minutes later he declares that his presentation is "complete" despite being instructed that the project will last for a number of weeks and being advised not to rush it. While Sandra urges him to add further details about ancient Egypt as well as including more pictures in his slides, in response to Rhys' reluctance to do so, she eventually suggests that he look at a video on the topic in an effort to keep him occupied. It is reasonable to conclude that because Rhys believes his knowledge and abilities are more than sufficient for the task at hand, he fails to find the task intrinsically motivating, and therefore focuses on its completion rather than on further mastering any of the skills it requires. In the engineering and art lessons, however, the reverse pattern was found with respect to the pupils' assessment of their own abilities and the work they produced. During the rocket construction phase of the engineering lesson, we see that when they observe the physical properties of their model rockets, both Rhys and Matt assign negative attributes to their creations:

Rhys: It's not sticking, they're not sticking. (*look how*) shit that one is.  
Matt: It's stupid

Interestingly, however, during the launching phase of the lesson, they become increasingly competitive and upon launching their own models, both Rhys and Matt joyfully declare that their rockets had travelled the furthest upward distances, assertions surrounded by much staff commendation:

Matt: Mine was the highest (h)  
Liz: yay!  
Matt: Mine was the highest (h)

Tracey: It was good that  
Rhys: Mine was the highest!  
Liz: That was fantastic!

On one level, the pupils' assertions here may simply be read as a form of playful banter, a form of stereotypically male competitive discourse, rather than as serious appraisals of the strengths of their constructions. However, alternatively, it could be argued that together with the jubilation surrounding the success of their rocket launches, the pupils' assertions of victory signals a degree of personal investment and attachment to their model rockets, despite their structural weaknesses. A similar self-evaluation trajectory was observed in the

art lesson, with the pattern of appraisal taking a dramatic shift from a negative, internal focus to a much more positive self-affirmation. Thus, when receiving guidance in order to sketch an outline drawing for the shape of his mask, Luke declares that his abilities here are wanting and expresses concern that this might lead to a poor performance:

Luke: I'm not really good at drawing, I might mess up at it

However, with the encouragement of the artist and teaching assistant, Luke persists to create a large snake-like mask which, on completion, he immediately deems successful:

Luke: There ya are, I'm a genius (h) Who's taking a picture then?

Indeed, in this example above, we even see that Luke invites staff to take photographs of his work which again, could be regarded as a signal of personal investment and attachment to his work since the camera possesses the ability to extend his creation into a format which not only preserves it but also allows for its redistribution and viewing amongst family and friends.

### **6.3.5 Self-Determined Student Behaviours: Key Findings**

The second aim for the present research analysis was to gain a more in-depth understanding of how self-determined behaviours might vary amongst students in different subject lessons. More specifically, verbal and behavioural data were examined to compare students' behaviours with respect to their basic psychological needs across the same three lessons that were considered in section 6.3.2. Again, the analysis revealed a certain set of similarities as well as some clear differences in student behaviours across the three lessons. Again, as was the case with their teachers, it was found that behavioural patterns were most distinctive amongst students in the ICT lesson, as participation here was marked by lower levels of student talk, instances of co-operation and positive self-evaluations. Student participation during this lesson was also marked by higher levels of help-seeking behaviour as well as more frequent questions to seek declarative forms of knowledge. In contrast to ICT, students participating in both the art and engineering classes contributed to the classroom dialogue more frequently, posed more frequent questions about task procedures, demonstrated higher levels of co-operative behaviour and generated more positive self-evaluations. The students participating in these lessons also demonstrated less help-seeking behaviours than their counterparts in ICT. Despite these commonalities between the art and ICT lesson,

students' participation during these lessons could be distinguished from each other in a number of key respects. It was found that students in ICT were freer than those in art to work with the classroom materials as they so wished, while students in the latter lesson received more instructions from the artist and asked a wide variety of questions, most notably amongst them being questions seeking feedback on their work. However, in ICT, it was found that while students asked a variety of different types of questions (i.e., questions seeking rationales and clarifications as well as questions to pose requests), permission-seeking was the dominant question form.

## **6.4 Discussion**

The aim of the research presented above was to consider the kinds of interpersonal relations that featured in the social and learning context of the school at the centre of the current case study analysis. More specifically, the observational and verbal analysis in this chapter examined whether there were any differences between the types of classroom interactions occurring across a sample of three subject lessons which were conducted by three different teaching professionals working with students based at the Ashwick centre. Two main questions were addressed: a) Do differences exist between the kinds of needs supportive behaviours enacted by the teachers delivering each lesson? b) Do differences exist in the kinds of responses enacted by students in relation to their teachers' attempts to support their needs? This discussion section will draw upon the sets of findings in response to both of these questions in order to more broadly consider the third research question which was outlined in Section 6.1, that is, what these findings convey about teacher-student relations across the three observed lessons.

To consider the needs support and needs fulfilment findings from a more global perspective, Table 6.11 presents a summary overview of the quantitative findings for each subject lesson across each of the six SDT constructs that were examined as part of the present research. In accordance with one of the most basic premises within SDT, it was found that where observed levels of support for basic psychological needs were higher, so too were the observed needs satisfaction behaviours amongst students. In other words, while the observed needs support behaviours amongst teaching staff were highest in art, intermediate in engineering and lowest in ICT; so too was the pattern of observed needs satisfaction behaviours across these three lessons.

Table 6.11

*Summary of Needs support and Needs fulfilment scores (Averages per student)*

Need Support		Art	Engineering	ICT
Construct	Teacher Indicator			
Relatedness	Proximity	11	10	1.3
Relatedness	Gestures	4	6	2.5
Autonomy	Commands	-1	-1.67	1.6
Competence	Praise	11.5	4.67	4.33
	Total	25.5	19	9.73
	Rank	1	2	3
Need Satisfaction		Art	Engineering	ICT
Construct	Student Indicator			
Relatedness	Student talk	1.9	2.1	0.9
Relatedness	Co-operation	4	4	-1.67
Relatedness	Gestures	2.66	1.66	-0.01
Autonomy	Independent learning	1.5	0.67	3.33
Competence	Student questions	7.3	6.33	6.33
	Total	17.36	14.76	8.88
	Rank	1	2	3

*Note: Negative behavioural indicators are denoted by minus signs*

This general finding is consistent with many existing studies in SDT which show a positive association between needs support and needs satisfaction within a variety of different social and educational domains, including exercise (Mack, Gunnell, Wilson & Wierst, 2016), game play (Sheldon & Filak, 2008), dance (Quested & Duda, 2010), athletics (Smith et al, 2016, Physical Education (Tessier, Sarrazin & Ntoumanis, 2010; De Meyer, Tallir, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Aelterman, Van den Berghe, & Haerens, 2014) and family relations (Hollifield & Conger, 2015). The approach adopted within the majority of this pre-existing research, however, has been to investigate the associations between SDT constructs by relying exclusively upon self-report data or else to combine such data with behavioural observations. Interestingly, the results yielded from these endeavours have been rather complex since associations have not only been found between each of the needs support constructs and their corresponding satisfaction construct (i.e., relatedness satisfaction with relatedness support, autonomy satisfaction with autonomy support etc.), but in several instances, associations between needs support constructs have extended to other basic psychological needs. For example, Sheldon and Filak (2008) found a statistically significant effect of participants' perception of competence support on their sense of competence as well as relatedness ( $d_s = .20$  and  $.15$  respectively). Similarly, Quested and Duda (2010) found

a statistically significant correlation between their participants' perceived autonomy support and their sense of autonomy *and* relatedness satisfaction ( $\beta$ s = .40 and .54 respectively). Of course, there is ample room within self-determination theory to accommodate a dynamic inter-play between the interactions between participants and the subsequent formation of their views. Indeed, it is important to remember that self-determination theory does not assume that support for each specific psychological need results in more satisfaction in the corresponding needs construct to the exclusion of all other basic needs.

However, what is unique about the current set of findings, is that there is a rather “neat” alignment between the observed levels of needs support and corresponding needs satisfaction constructs. Table 6.11 shows that while the ICT lesson obtained the both highest autonomy support and autonomy satisfaction scores, this lesson also obtained the lowest competence support, competence satisfaction, relatedness support and relatedness satisfaction scores. Meanwhile, the Engineering lesson obtained the lowest levels of autonomy support and autonomy satisfaction, while the Art lesson obtained the highest competence support and competence satisfaction scores. Interestingly, the art lesson scored slightly higher on relatedness satisfaction behaviours than the engineering lesson despite obtaining a slightly lower relatedness support score when compared this lesson. However, the differences in scores here are so slight that it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions. Overall, however, we see that there is a substantial degree of alignment between the observed behaviours for the various needs support constructs and their corresponding needs satisfaction constructs. One reason for these findings might be that it is an effect of the research instrument. For example, it may be that some behavioural indicators for the needs support constructs (e.g., classroom organization) may be too similar to the student behaviour constructs (e.g., proximity between students) to capture meaningful differences between the teachers and students. However, given the wide array of behaviours observed and the triangulation of behavioural data with an analysis of lesson transcripts, it is suggested that this is unlikely.

An alternative reason for the present pattern of findings might be that students are responding to different teaching styles. Deci, Nezlek, and Sheinman (1981) and Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, and Ryan (1981) have previously considered the role of different teaching styles in supporting self-determined behaviours in students, reasoning that differences here may determine whether teachers provide a primarily informational or a

primarily controlling environment for their pupils. In fact these researchers have proposed a variable in teachers called "orientation toward control versus autonomy with children," which they believe captures the important differences in the teachers who diminish versus those who enhance the intrinsic motivation of their students. However, over the course of the present classroom observations, few examples of controlling teaching behaviours were witnessed and positive behavioural indicators largely outweighed the negative indicators. Indeed, this supports the observational findings of Stroet, Opdenakker and Minnaert (2015), who analysed teacher–student interactions in a prototypical traditional class (i.e., where the emphasis is upon the teacher’s authority and the dissemination of knowledge) and a prototypical social constructivist class (i.e., where the emphasis is upon students taking a more active role by working on contextualised tasks in an authentic context) and found few instances of autonomy thwarting behaviours amongst teachers. In fact, according to the latter research findings, different manifestations of autonomy support were found within each of the observed lessons, for example, while in the traditional lesson, the teacher supported students’ autonomy using whole-class discussions, in the social constructivist class, the teacher relied more upon step-by-step guidance for individual students. Like Stroet and colleagues findings, then, the current research indicates that any simple dichotomy between the “good” and “bad” when it comes to supporting students basic psychological needs is unlikely to capture nuances between different teachers and students in everyday educational practice.

Consequently, it is suggested that the more graduated, five-part typology as devised by Grasha (1994) provides a more fruitful means of distinguishing between the lessons. According to Grasha (1996), teaching styles are a combination of qualities, needs, beliefs, and behaviours that teachers display in the classroom which are important in guiding and directing the way they teach. Upon conducting a thematic analysis of teacher interviews and pre-existing literature, Grasha proposed that five pervasive teaching styles exist in classrooms: the styles of expert, formal authority, personal model, facilitator, and delegator. According to Grasha, no one style is better than another, and the types are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, researchers are cautioned against placing a teacher in only one of the five types as it is argued that teachers often blend styles together in practice.

Indeed, in the current research, it is clear that all three of the teachers take on their own unique blend of Grasha’s teaching styles. For example, we see that the ICT lesson begins

with the teacher, Sandra, at the front of the classroom next to the projector where she adopts a more 'facilitative' teaching style which emphasizes guiding students and we see Sandra do this by asking students lots of questions and providing examples of the kinds of options they have for their forthcoming ICT project. Following this, she adopts a more "delegative" style by allowing the students to work independently on their project while remaining available at their request. According to Grasha, both the facilitative and delegative teaching styles work towards students perceiving themselves as independent learners. While the former style achieves this interactively, using guidance and instructional support; the latter strives to build students capacity by affording them the opportunity to work on learning tasks and activities with minimal teacher intrusion. Indeed, over the course of the ICT lesson, it was found that the teacher's directives rarely took the form of commands, but instead were offered as more open-ended proposals on what was considered the most desirable state of classroom affairs. For much of the lesson, Sandra sat at a distance behind the students, answering questions when asked and periodically monitoring their progress. Praise offered during this lesson was also minimal, with staff assigning broadly positive attributes to student outcomes rather than providing more in-depth or descriptive forms of feedback. According to Grasha, this combination of teaching styles works best when students are capable and have appropriate levels of knowledge, can take initiative, and can assume responsibility. The teacher must be viewed as approachable in order to consult effectively with students and must be willing to give up some control over tasks.

Indeed, students in the ICT lesson conducted the highest levels of additional independent work and the overwhelming majority of questions posed by students in ICT sought declarative knowledge from the teacher. However, pupil evaluations of their own efforts were rare and although the pupils in this class sat in the closest proximity to each other, levels of positive behavioural gestures and instances of co-operation were all much lower in this lesson when compared with pupil behaviours in the art and engineering lessons. Because each pupil worked on a separate computer for the majority of the former lesson, it was suggested that the potential for interaction between students was somewhat constrained. In fact, the verbal data analysis revealed that while the distribution of student talk was similar in the art and engineering sessions (approximately 20%), the rate of student talk in the ICT lesson was somewhat lower (9%). Grasha has pointed out that one of the disadvantages of delegative and facilitative teaching styles is that they are sometimes employed when

students may not wish to interact with teaching staff and/or peers in order to enhance their understanding of the learning tasks that have been provided. Consequently, if a lesson does not require students to work with others, as was the case in ICT, the potential for students to develop a stronger sense of relatedness within their school environment may be compromised.

In contrast to the ICT lesson, the seating arrangement in the engineering lesson permitted the students to see each other as they worked on creating their model rockets and it was suggested that this created a classroom climate more conducive to social interaction. In fact, these lessons had higher rates of verbal interaction between staff and pupils, higher rates of positive behavioural gestures and higher rates of proximity between participants. It is suggested that the teaching style adopted in this lesson is best characterised as a mix between what Grasha terms the "personal-model" and the "formal authority" styles. The former involves the teacher overseeing, guiding, and directing students how to do things while the latter sees the teacher keen to provide feedback, establish learning goals and rules of conduct for students. Over the course of the engineering lesson we see that Michelle, the engineering teacher, places an emphasis upon procedural knowledge as she guides the pupils through the various stages of constructing a model rocket. She frequently circulated the classroom and offered a range of options that students may choose between as they construct their models. Meanwhile, the teaching staff's praise during this lesson tended to centre on task processes and procedures. Nevertheless, in order to maintain a sense of authority, direct commands were frequently issued to students (i.e., students were told in no uncertain terms to adopt/not to adopt a certain course of action). However, the potential for these commands to be interpreted as overly controlling was often minimized by staff employing a polite tone.

In terms of the students' response to this teaching style, it was found that questions seeking procedural knowledge and permission were more frequent in the engineering lesson. According to Grasha, for a teaching style which blends formal authority with personal modelling to work well, teachers must build relationships with students in order to coach effectively. Indeed, with respect to the indicators of relatedness support, we see that positive behavioural gestures and closer proximity between teacher and students are met with higher levels of student talk and co-operation. Therefore, it is suggested that the hands-on nature of the approach whereby the teacher emphasises direct observation and carrying out specific procedures required that students to interact more regularly than was the case



during the more hands-off approach adopted during project work in ICT. As a result, we see higher scores on indicators of support for and satisfaction of students' relatedness needs. However, Grasha warns that a strong investment in the formal authority-personal modelling style can lead to a rigidity in instruction which may overlook differences in student needs and goals as learners. While some students might feel inadequate if they cannot live up to the expectations and standards of the model, others might resent not being given credit for the knowledge acquired or the ability to work more independently. Indeed, it is worth noting that the engineering lesson obtained the lowest scores on indicators of autonomy support and autonomy satisfaction. Moreover, there were moments during the engineering lesson when student frustrations were discernible. For example, when Rhys is experiencing difficulties in keeping his model rocket intact, he accuses his teacher, Michelle, of deliberately causing damage to his model. While Michelle reassures him that she would not deliberately damage a pupil's work and offers to make the necessary repair, Rhys resists this offer asserting that this will diminish his status as the originator of the model. Tensions are resolved when Michelle returns the model rocket to Rhys and suggests to him how it could be repaired. On this occasion, the conflict may have escalated had Michelle insisted on repairing Rhys' rocket and it is likely that her more flexible approach and insight into her student's needs helped to alleviate Rhys' frustration. In fact, since the students' own evaluations of their work took a dramatic shift from a negative, internal focus in the earlier stages of the lesson to more positive self-affirmations by the end of the lesson, it seems reasonable to conclude that students and staff were satisfied that the learning objectives had been met and a positive rapport between staff and students had been maintained.

Like Michelle's personal-modelling approach in the engineering lesson, the artist delivering the mask-making workshop spent much of the session overseeing, guiding, and directing the participating students on a variety of creative tasks such as designing a mask template, preparing stencils and blending colours to create desired textures. Indeed, when compared with engineering, the art lesson had similar levels of verbal interaction between staff and pupils and similar positive relatedness support and relatedness satisfaction scores for gestures, proximity, co-operation and verbal interaction. However, one of the key differences between the artist's teaching style and that of the engineering teacher was that rather than relying upon a more formal kind of authority that is frequently bestowed upon teaching professionals in their role as guardians of school discipline, the artist possesses more of an expert status among the participating students by virtue of her skills and

experience as a professional illustrator. Indeed, over the course of the lesson we see that the artist enact what Grasha calls an “expert” teaching style, by displaying a detailed knowledge of the materials provided and by challenging students to create original designs and to experiment with new art techniques. Moreover, when offering feedback to the students, the artist frequently provided more elaborate commentary on technical details and material properties of the pupils’ creations are highlighted in an effort to draw attention to some of the potential they offered for further creative practice. In her role as a collaborating professional, neither politeness nor open-ended proposals were necessary in order to guide students without the risk of tensions emerging. Instead direct commands were frequently issued without challenge. In fact, it was only during the art session that students actively posed questions in an effort to gain staff feedback on their creative efforts. This likely indicates that the students perceive the artist as having more knowledge and technical expertise than they do, yet over the course of the lesson we see that the students’ appraisal of their creative abilities makes a dramatic shift from reluctance and self-doubt towards much more positive evaluations of their efforts.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Self-determination theory asserts that the characteristics of the classroom environment are critical to the level of need satisfaction that individuals experience when undertaking learning tasks. While certain types of interpersonal supports embedded in social environments are regarded as likely to enhance the satisfaction of an individual’s basic psychological needs, other features of the social environment are seen to contribute to the active blocking or diminishing of an individuals’ sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness. While SDT research is clear in showing that positive learning outcomes accrue in classrooms that support students’ perceived needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, much less is known about the multiple ways in which need supportive teaching is manifested and responded to in practice. Indeed, of those SDT observational studies which have been conducted, the focus has remained confined to a limited number of SDT constructs. The present research has contributed towards addressing this gap in the SDT literature by considering the extent to which all three of the basic psychological needs were being acted upon by students and supported by teachers. To this end, a new observational coding instrument was developed which allows classification of in-class observations according to a set of six positive and six negative indicators of self-determined behaviour

amongst learners and a set of three positive and three negative indicators of teacher support for self-determined learning. In addition to conducting live classroom observations, audio-recordings of lessons were produced in order to permit a content coding and analysis of verbatim transcripts of verbal interaction between students and teachers.

The findings of the current study are broadly consistent with SDT's basic premise with respect to the role of needs support in students' school lives since they indicate that where levels of needs support are higher, so too are behavioural manifestations of needs satisfaction amongst students. In other words, while the observed needs support behaviours amongst teaching staff were highest in art, intermediate in engineering and lowest in ICT; so too was the pattern of observed needs fulfilment behaviours amongst students across the three lessons. The present analysis also revealed that there were substantial differences between the three classroom environments in terms of their social-contextual characteristics and the kinds of behaviours enacted by the participants within them. It is worth noting that while Ryan and Deci (2000) have suggested that the three psychological needs are universal and invariant across age, this does not imply that their relative salience and avenues for satisfaction are unchanging across contexts. Indeed, in the present study we see a relatively different emphasis placed upon each of the basic needs across the three lessons – autonomy in ICT, relatedness in engineering and competence in Art. It was suggested that the substantial level of congruence between the individual needs support and needs satisfaction scores across the different lessons were symptomatic of the students responding in different ways to the different teaching styles encountered within them.

These findings have implications for future research and practice. They highlight the importance of considering not just the amount of need support and need satisfaction when investigating education contexts, but also the *kinds* of needs being addressed. Since the analysis of in-class behaviours revealed that within each of the observed lessons, a specific psychological need came to the fore, an important avenue for future research will be to investigate the extent to which all three of the basic psychological needs are being addressed within different educational contexts. It may be, for example, that there exists a limited amount of time and energy that teachers can devote to the different needs within the constraints of standardised curricula and pre-allocated lesson times. It may also be, as was suggested above, that teachers adopt different teaching styles when delivering their lessons and that embedded within these styles is an orientation towards supporting certain

psychological needs above others. Beyond this, it has been argued (for example, see Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006) that if there is an imbalance among the satisfaction of the psychological needs, this potentially reflects inappropriate allocations of resources across the different domains of school life, which may induce stresses and conflicts that ultimately detract from engagement in learning. Another important question is whether more general features of students' basic needs dispositions influence their behavioural responses during lessons and impact upon the manner in which they perceive their teachers' actions. For instance, a student with an autonomous orientation toward ICT may be relatively more receptive to a teacher's facilitation of independent learning activities than a student with a greater orientation towards competence or relatedness. In addition, within any given classroom, there is likely to be differences between individual students in terms of the extent to which they perceive their needs as being satisfied within the school context. Indeed, in Chapter 5, questionnaire and interview data revealed substantial differences between students who participated in the art programme at the Ashwick in terms of their perceived levels of competence in art and relatedness with their school peers.

## **6.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the results of a series of classroom observations from an SDT perspective which were conducted to investigate some of the more immediate features of day-to-day lessons at the Ashwick. The extent to which pupils' psychological needs were being supported and satisfied in two different subject lessons (ICT and engineering) were compared with a mask-making workshop delivered as part of the art component of the present research initiative. Observational findings revealed a substantial level of congruence between the scores for the needs support constructs and the needs satisfaction constructs, with the frequencies of both the observed needs support behaviours and the needs satisfaction behaviours highest in art, intermediate in engineering and lowest in ICT. Nevertheless, extensive differences were found between the behaviours of students and teachers in the ICT lesson, especially when compared with those taking place within art and engineering. The findings from the verbal data analysis also pointed towards a more subtle set of differences between art and engineering. It was argued that the students observed were responding in different ways to different blends of teaching styles which were present within their three subject lessons.

## **Chapter 7 Student Agency in the Classroom: A Comparative Analysis**

This chapter reports the results of a series of analyses of verbal classroom data which were conducted in order to investigate the ways in which student agency was manifested across two subject lessons and a mask-making workshop which was delivered as part of the educational initiative which forms the basis of the present PhD thesis (for details see section 3.4.3). In Section 7.1, a rationale for the investigation of student agency is presented. Following this, details of the methodological approach adopted for this research are presented. In Section 7.3 the findings of the analysis of the verbal data are presented. Audio transcripts of in-class communication between students and teachers in these three lessons are presented and compared using Rainio's (2008) conceptual framework for the analysis of student agency. It was found that the art lesson emerged as unique for its low levels of student resistance which were promptly resolved upon further technical assistance. In Section 7.4 it is argued that the research presented in this chapter helps to contribute to our understanding of the dynamic and emergent nature of agency as students participate in classroom activities.

### **7.1 Introduction: Rationale for an investigation of student agency**

#### *SDT and CHAT Perspectives on Student Agency*

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in student agency as a means by which students adopt a more proactive role when engaging in classroom learning. For example, Reeve and Tseng (2011) propose the concept of "agentic engagement" which they define as students' constructive contribution to the flow of the instruction they receive. It is argued that this form of engagement is meaningfully different to other types of engagement (i.e., cognitive, behavioural, emotional) because it is uniquely proactive and transactional (Reeve, 2013). In other words, agentic engagement involves students taking action before learning activity are finalized and involves students negotiating with their teachers for a more motivationally supportive learning environment. While research on this particular conceptualization is in its early stages, a small body of supporting evidence exists for Reeve's notion of agentic engagement. For example, using questionnaire data from 315 middle-school students in Korea (ages 12-16), Reeve (2013) found that when students reported higher levels of agentic engagement (e.g., show initiative, ask questions) earlier in the academic year, they later reported that they perceived higher levels of autonomy support

from their teachers. In a similar study with 313 Korean high school students (ages 15-19), Reeve and Lee (2014) showed that when students reported rising levels of agentic engagement earlier on in the school year, they later reported perceiving significantly greater autonomy need satisfaction. For Reeve, such findings suggest that students can, through agentic acts of engagement, create a more motivationally supportive learning environment for themselves, especially in relation to the satisfaction of their own psychological needs and how supportive they perceive their teachers to be.

Nevertheless, in specifically emphasising a “constructive” contribution from students to their instruction, Reeve’s notion of agentic engagement can be positioned alongside the more dichotomous forms of analysis which are frequently seen in SDT with social contexts being regarded as something which can *either* support *or* thwart humans’ natural tendencies toward psychological growth. Other researchers, however, working from a CHAT perspective, adopt a broader view which takes account of the wider social demands placed upon teachers as they work within schools. For example, according to Rainio (2008) agency should not only be understood as something which emerges from harmonious participation within a community, but also as something which arises through acts of resistance or defiance because these may too eventually result in positive change. In addition, Rainio points out that the problem of promoting student agency is that, although personal volition and initiative is crucial for learning and development, the need for control and order in classrooms often makes it hard for teachers to afford students this freedom. With these issues in mind, Rainio has developed an analytical method for empirically tracing the development of individual agency in classroom interaction which includes a focus on a) self-change through participation in learning activities b) the transformation of dominant power relations through student acts of resistance and c) student gains in learning, understanding and responsibilities through collaboration with others in their learning community. Using a more fine-grained version of this scheme, Rainio focuses on the empirical case of a 7-year-old Finnish boy fictitiously named “Anton” and traces the manner in which his participation develops across a series of “playworld” activities<sup>12</sup> which were being delivered by teachers at his local elementary school. Although initially Anton is considered by staff as a challenging, and problematic child, Rainio finds that as a complex power struggle between them ensues,

---

<sup>12</sup> An educational practice that includes adult-child joint pretense and dramatization of texts from children’s literature combined with the production of visual art. See Lindqvist, 1995.

Anton receives more attention from his teachers which in turn allows him to become more actively involved in the classroom activities. Rainio also argues that the creative nature of improvised role plays during the playworld sessions allowed teachers to temporarily side-step their professional roles as authority figures and to elaborate alternative ways of relating to their students.

Like Rainio, other researchers have also drawn upon CHAT perspectives to investigate how children's sense of agency is manifested in their everyday lives. For example, Kumpulainen, Lipponen, Hilppö and Mikkola (2014) invited 29 third-grade students (9 – 10 years old) from Helsinki, Finland to take photographs of people, things and situations that were important to them and discussed these pictures with the participating students during interviews. In line with Rainio's analysis, they found that the children's sense of agency was manifested in recognitions of others as a significant sources of help and well-being, definitions of the self as a valued member of one's community, and the ability to take constructive actions to contribute to these communities. In a similar analysis, Rajala, Hilppö, Lipponen and Kumpulainen (2013) considered the different kinds of opportunities available to students to develop their agency over the course of an educational initiative entitled "Bicycles on the move", which saw students collaborating with city authorities and influencing the decision-making of their local City Council. It was noted that students were able to develop a sense of agency in a number of different ways including building and connecting to a network of relevant others in order to ask for help, seek opinions or take joint action, contributing to public political debate about cycling issues, being regarded by others as knowledgeable and committed participants, developing a greater self-awareness about the conditions faced by cyclists on local roads and questioning and problematizing current ideas about traffic arrangements that had been taken for granted by others.

Other researchers have paid closer attention to variations in the different forms of student agency as they occur during classroom interactions. For example, Damsa, Kirchner, Andriessen, Erkens and Sins (2010) conducted in-depth case studies using a mix of transcribed group discussions, final interviews, meeting notes, e-mail correspondence, and group products to compare patterns of agentic action across two groups of students who were collaborating on course work at a large Dutch university. It was found that while the first group's agency was characterised by a dominance of actions around the construction of knowledge (e.g., developing awareness of problems and information gaps, discussing and sharing ideas, collaboratively generating ideas, and using feedback constructively); the

second group's agency was characterised by much less of a focus on the knowledge needed for the project and, instead involved actions designed to regulate the group activities. Elsewhere, Clarke, Howley, Resnick and Rosé (2016) examined patterns of participation amongst a group of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students (ages 14-15) in their biology lessons over a period of 6 consecutive weeks. An analysis of 44 transcribed audio recordings revealed substantial variations in the levels of verbal contributions from individual students in their lessons, so while some students participated in class discussions very frequently, others only rarely contributed to classroom dialogues. In addition, high contributors were far more likely than low contributors to participate without being explicitly asked to do so and the classroom teacher turned to these students more readily when seeking contributions to ongoing discussions.

Finally, other researchers have focused more specifically on the emergence of resistant forms of student agency. For example, Malin (2012) used ethnographic methods to investigate children's agency in art making classes in an elementary school over the course of one academic year and found that although many of the children strove to follow the rules and conform to norms and expectations of the art classroom, there were also many occasions where they transformed art assignments into meaningful activity by redefining classroom norms and by breaking rules when experimenting with assignments, and using art materials in ways that did not conform to art world practice. Lehtonen (2015) produced a similar set of findings when she applied an adapted version of Rainio's (2008) classificatory scheme to observational data which was collected during a cross-curricular performance project about climate change which was delivered over a series of 48 lessons to a group of students (ages 13-14) at an international school in Belgium. Lehtonen found that while levels of resistance were initially relatively high, as the students' concerns and complaints were responded to, overall instances of resistance decreased. In addition, as levels of resistance decreased, students became more actively involved in the project, concentrated better and instances of passive behaviour decreased. As a result, Lehtonen concludes that in this case, the process of engagement began with resistance and transformed to more constructive forms of agency.



## **7.2 Research Aims and Questions**

The research presented in this chapter aims to contribute to this emerging literature base on variants of student agency by applying Rainio's (2008) classification of student agency to consider the impact of the art initiative which was delivered to participating students at the Ashwick as part of the main research project at the centre of this thesis. To this end, the audio-recordings of the three lessons (art, engineering, ICT) which were analysed from an SDT perspective in Chapter 6, were reanalyzed, but this time, by drawing upon Rainio's CHAT-based perspectives. The following research questions were addressed:

- (d) Do patterns of agentic action amongst students vary between lessons?
- (e) What information do variations in these patterns found convey about teacher-student relations across the lessons observed?

## **7.3 Methodology**

As outlined in section 6.3.3, audio-recordings of three lessons (art, engineering, ICT) which were delivered between late June and early July 2014, were taken and then transcribed using the Jefferson transcription system (a total of 3 recordings of 53 minutes duration each, see Appendix C for details of notation symbols used). Descriptions of the key events occurring within each lesson are detailed in 6.4 along with background details for each of the six KS3 students (aged 13-14), two teaching assistants, two teachers and one artist who participated in the observed lessons.

The forthcoming analysis draws upon Rainio's (2008) theoretically based tools and ways for recognizing, conceptualizing, and interpreting the complexities of agency development in educational settings. Agency is understood by Rainio as a complex and contradictory process developed over time but simultaneously grounded in local interactions, to the roles and positions available to students and teachers. She identifies three forms of agency which will form the basis of the present analysis: (a) agency as self-change and as transforming the objective of an activity; (b) agency as becoming a responsible and intentional member of a learning group or a classroom and thus a member of a society; and (c) agency as resistance and transgression that transforms one's relation to and position in an activity and thus the dominant power relations.

In order to investigate the extent to which these three forms of agency characterised the observed classroom interactions, the transcribed verbal data was firstly segmented into interactive episodes (i.e., events in the classroom characterised by interactions between two or more participants with clear starting and ending points) and then exchanges between pupils and teachers were coded according to what Rainio specifies as five main types of classroom initiatives: constructing, supporting, responding, deconstructing, and resisting (see Table 5.1 for details on each type of initiative). Initiatives are tools used by the participant to redefine the activity or position self and others and thus influence such issues as who has the power to control and decide. Whereas supportive and constructive initiatives are directed toward creating, sustaining, or sharing something that the class does, the deconstructive and resistant initiatives are used by pupils in order to distance themselves from a common task or test the limits of the activity or the other actors through direct opposition and confrontation. Although Rainio has outlined terms for the use of “passive” code to highlight cases of student inaction, this code was eliminated from the schedule for the present analysis as the usage of audio data posed practical limitations with respect to relying upon acoustics for the detection of student inaction (i.e., silence could indicate a student’s passivity but it could also indicate other relevant cognitive activity such as concentration etc.).

Like Lehtonen (2015), the coding of the transcribed classroom data proceeded according to Rainio’s original fine-grained scheme (see Table 7.1), however, it sometimes became difficult to distinguish between cases where students were simply “responding” to their peers and teachers, and cases where such responses could be read as a more indirect way of demonstrating support to others. In addition, it was not always easy to distinguish between instances where students’ utterances simply produced a more destabilized set of classroom relations, and instances where students’ utterances could be seen as a direct form of resistance to the classroom order. This was because in many cases, both agentic forms coincided, thus making it difficult to determine the exact point when destabilized relations had given way to more overt forms of resistance.

Therefore, in order to investigate broader patterns agency but also retaining the basic dynamic that underlies Rainio’s original classifications, an adapted version of the scheme was employed. Consequently, verbalisations which were initially coded as “responsive” and “supportive” were combined to consider levels of *relational* forms of agency; verbalisations

coded as “constructive” action orientations were employed to consider levels of *transformative* forms of agency; and verbalisations coded as “deconstructive” and “resistant” action orientations were combined to consider levels of *transgressive* forms of agency (see Table 7.1 for details). This tripartite classification more closely aligns with Rainio’s analysis of the pre-existing literature in the field where a distinction is drawn between agency as responsible community membership (i.e., relational), agency as self-transformation (i.e., transformative), and agency as resistance to dominant power relations (i.e., transgressive).

**Table 7.1**

*Coding Scheme for Classroom Verbal Interaction: Adapted from Rainio (2007)*

Action orientation	Definition	Form of Agency
Responsive	Participating in classroom activity by answering questions, nodding when asked, following instructions	Relational
Supportive	Supporting a teacher’s/peer’s suggestion/act/idea with one’s own idea/gesture etc.	Relational
Constructive	Potentially developing or contributing to an event in question. New suggestions, ideas, questions, also gestures and sounds.	Transformative
Deconstructive	Destablising the emerging activity. Often repositioning oneself in relation to the activity, trying to find a place in it. Actions here are used for distancing oneself from a common task	Transgressive
Resistant	Aiming at resisting the existing order and structure of the play plan. Often against a person in a power position. Also testing and teasing.	Transgressive

In order to gain a more global view of the classroom dynamics for each of the three lessons, the coding framework outlined in Table 7.1 was applied to each of the three sets of transcribed data. Following this, the analysis then turned to elaborating some of the critical incidences occurring within each subject session. The aim here was to move documenting the occurrence and prevalence of incidences of agentic action, towards a deeper consideration of what these might mean for the development of student engagement.

The Critical Incident Analysis (CIA) strategy aims to generate a thorough description of an experienced event within its specific context. This involves producing a written account of events in the form of a structured narrative. The analysing process consists of selecting the main episodes of the activity/event under consideration, elaborating upon the manner in which these episodes have unfolded and reflecting upon evidence for the outcomes of participants' actions, their feelings during the process and any notable changes in their behaviours (Webster & Mertova, 2007). As, Herr and Brown (2011) point out, definitions of critical incidents vary from those who see them as “surprises” or “problematic situations”, to “highly charged moments and episodes that have enormous consequences for personal change and development”), to “mostly straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice”. In the present research analysis, the denotation of an event as a critical incident signals, the event in question has been selected for its potential to act as a stimulus for further reflection on the interpersonal processes surrounding agentic action. In other words, the critical incidents outlined below represent “telling cases” (Mitchell, 1984) where the particular circumstances outlined acted as generators of the researcher’s understanding of student agency as elaborated by Rainio (2008). Rather than separating the transcription of the event from its analytic, the presentation of analysis below follows the tradition of ethnographic “thick description,” analysis and interpretation of events using commentary to deconstruct the events.

## **7.4 Findings**

### **7.4.1 Comparing Patterns in Student Agency Across the Three Lessons**

Figure 7.1 depicts the frequency (in terms of the number of lines of transcribed text) of verbal interactions coded as manifesting relational, transformative or transgressive forms of student agency. This content analysis reveals that there is a substantial level of variation between individual students with respect to how frequently their verbal exchanges were coded as manifesting each of the three different types of agency. In addition, as is consistent with the SDT analysis in Chapter 6, the ICT lesson emerges as most distinctive since the total levels of text coded for each form of agency appear considerably lower than their counterparts in Art and Engineering. The content analysis also shows that verbalisations manifesting relational forms of agency, (i.e., interactions which were characterised as being either responsive or supportive in orientation), were more frequently occurring than verbalisations manifesting transformative or transgressive forms of agency. Levels of verbal

transgression were notably higher in the engineering lesson than those in art and ICT, however, overall, transgressive interactions tended to be the least frequent manifestation of pupil agency with interactions indicative of transformative agency occurring more frequently in all lessons and most individual cases. In order to consider potential explanations for variations between the observed lessons, the analysis now turns to a consideration of pupil agency within context as demonstrated by verbal exchanges over the course of the lessons.

#### **7.4.2 Critical Incident Analysis**

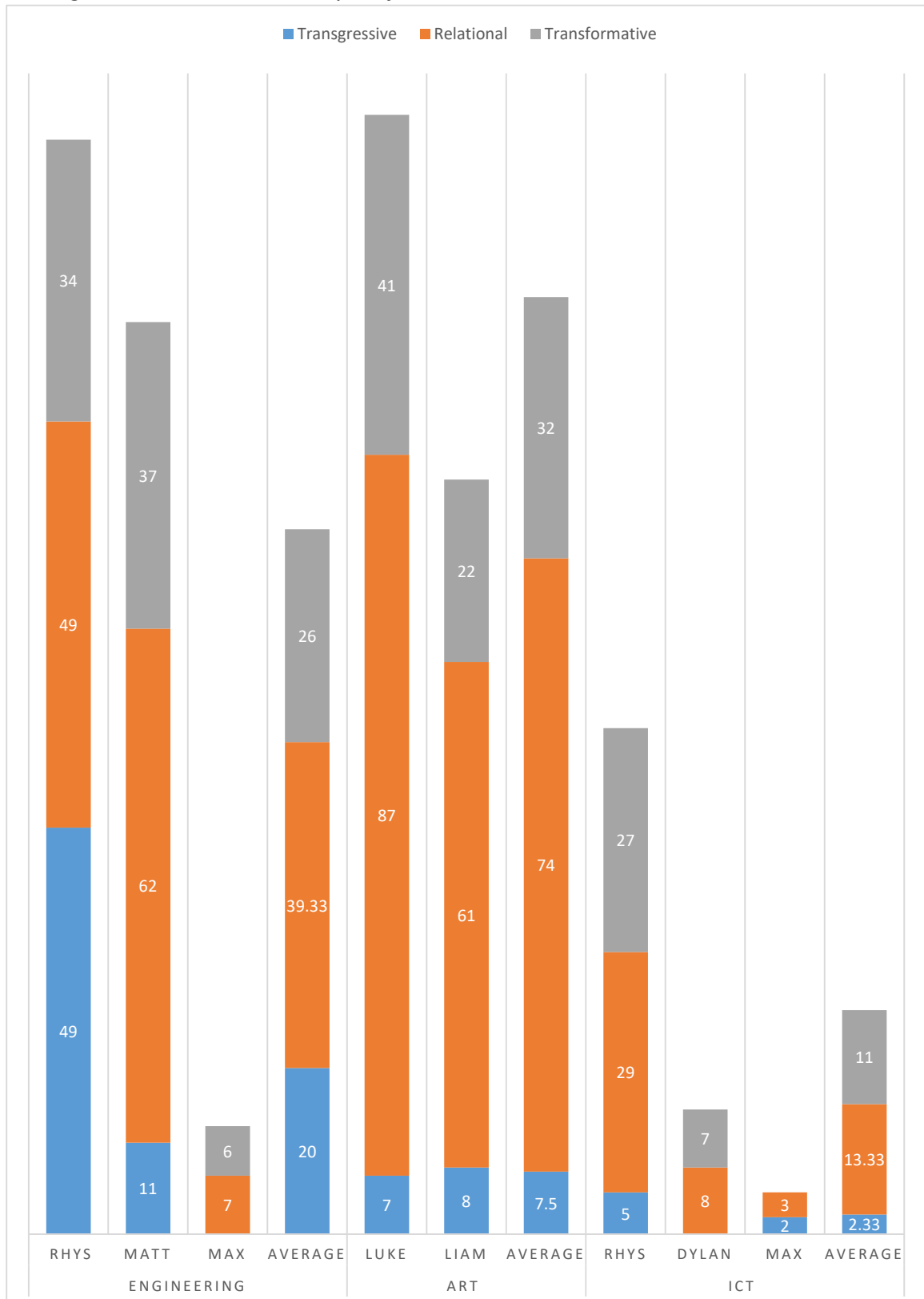
##### **Transgressive Agency**

As Rainio (2008) highlights, one of the contradictions frequently besetting schools in mainstream and specialist contexts like the Ashwick, is that pupils are expected to learn not only how to express themselves and develop their learning but they are also expected to conform to the constraints of the existing school culture by learning to control themselves and their desires. When pupils attempt to resist these constraints however, they do so in a variety of ways. Interestingly, while student resistance was found to occur more frequently in the engineering lesson, the nature of this resistance also represented some of the most direct instances of attempting to challenge and undermine the norms as established by the school rules. In the exchanges below, for example, we see that in his frustration while attempting to attach fins to his model rocket, Rhys is politely cautioned for swearing, but rather than passively submit to the school rules, he protests that his teachers were not listening to him as he expressed the difficulties he was having in attempting to repair his rocket:

Rhys: Here you are<, these fucking things  
Michelle: Watch your language↑ please Rhys  
Rhys: Ah well you're not listening to me are ya?  
Michelle: I didn't hear you to be honest, no  
Rhys: That's coz you're just listening to swear words, you'd heard me swear, but you'd never heard me:  
Tracey: I heard you swear and I'm over here  
Rhys: Yeh but you never heard me  
Tracey: I did↑ hear you  
Rhys: What did I say then?  
Tracey: I'm not repeating it  
Rhys: Without the swear words, what did I say?

**Figure 7.1**

*Agentic Action: Content Analysis of Student Contributions*



While his teacher, Michelle admits that she did not hear Rhys, teaching assistant, Tracey emphasises Michelle's observation that Rhys' was using expletives when expressing his anger. Rather than focusing upon this breach of the school rules, Rhys, however, points out the apparent contradiction that while his teachers could "hear" him swear but they failed to appreciate the substance of the remainder of what he had to say. While Tracey's subsequent failure to respond to Rhys' persistent challenge to recount what he had been saying could be considered as a tacit admission of defeat, Michelle quickly takes over and redirects Rhys attention by gently suggesting that he return to the classroom to get some glue in order to repair his rocket. By taking up his teacher's suggestion, Rhys departs from the scene of the conflict in the school yard, thereby bringing an end to this temporary rupture in group relations.

Unlike the more direct form of confrontation adopted by Rhys above, whereby teaching staff were persistently challenged for the seeming contradictions in their behaviours, the type of resistance met by teaching staff in art and ICT was more frequently characterised by more indirect attempts to subvert the classroom order. For example, for the most part, Max's resistance to participating in the ICT presentation task is enacted in a passive manner by maintaining an ongoing silence and by failing to respond to an extended series of staff offers, recommendations and suggestions. While more active forms of resistance, such as those enacted by Rhys, entail an open effort to reject or alter the current classroom situation (i.e., by drawing attention to the difficulty he has with ensuring his rocket stays fully intact rather than his use of swear words to express his frustration), McFarland (2004) argues that passive forms of resistance, such as those adopted by Max, are more aptly interpreted as an expression of malcontent or critique. Indeed, the teaching staff offered Max a variety of opportunities to undertake alternative activities (e.g., watch videos on ancient Egypt, observe other pupils as they work, go for a drink of water, take a walk, talk to the teaching assistant outside the classroom), nevertheless, despite his teachers attempts to redress the situation by offering a more expanded selection of activities, it could be argued that Max's continued refusal to enter into any form of negotiation with teaching staff regarding his classroom participation signals a deeper level of discontent with his situation. Indeed, because the teaching staff fail to find a solution to Max's ongoing social withdrawal, they begin to quietly discuss whether he would be better placed at a different alternative school.

In the art lesson, although the pupils attempt to subvert the classroom order were more indirect and subtle in the form they took, they nevertheless, proved much less challenging for the artist to redress. Indeed, reluctance to participate in classroom activities most often came after a period of sustained creative effort on the part of the pupil, and as such, the transgressive verbal exchanges that followed could be read as an indication that their attention and interest in the task had waned. For example, upon completion of a large facial section of his mask, Luke ceases working on the adjoining body section thereby prompting the artist to amicably request that he add some further colour and texture to it:

Artist: Do that bit mate [*indicates section of the mask*]

Luke: It's too big

Researcher: do what? What you'd do is use the, use [the oil pastels] on the side

Artist: just speed it all up a bit

Although Luke initially protests that the cardboard section in question is too large and therefore too demanding for him to continue with, he receives directions to apply the colour by holding the oil pastel horizontally in order to get broader coverage and by increasing his application speed. Upon receiving these directions, Luke promptly returns to working on his mask thus allowing the artist to turn her attention to assisting Liam with his mask. Therefore, unlike the attempts to renegotiate the objectives of the ICT lesson in order to encourage Max to participate, we see no such dilution of anticipated outcomes for the art lesson. On one hand, it could be argued that the renegotiation of ICT activities in line with what teaching staff consider as more preferable from the point of view of their pupils, is highly effective since levels of transgressive interaction remain much lower than that of art and engineering. On the other hand, however, whether this strategy has an impact upon the manifestation of other forms of pupil agency remains to be seen, especially, since these too are also considerably lower than their counterparts in engineering and art.

### **Transformative Agency**

According to Rainio (2008), another possible way to understand agency in relation to learning is to consider the latter as a process in which pupils partake in activities so as to expand and transform their understandings of the ways in which the world can be conceptualised. There will also be developments in the pupils' general classroom dispositions during this process of conceptual expansion and transformation. In the ICT lesson, such developments rarely occurred. Indeed, as was highlighted in the section above, Max sustained his social withdrawal from the classroom activities for the duration of the observation. Dylan,



however, promptly began to create a presentation in which he compares life in ancient Egypt with life there today, having established with his teacher that the project could be approached in a similar way to a presentation project on Brazil he had previously completed:

Sandra: Powerpoints? You know how to do powerpoints? No, yeh? I want you to do a bit of research, now you can just pick Egypt in general, you could]

Dylan: [like the one I did with Brazil Power (*theme of Dylan's previous presentation*)

Sandra: sorry?

Dylan: like the one I did with Brazil Power

Sandra: yes like the one >you did with Brazil Power< . So you can pick comparing Ancient Egypt with modern Egypt if you want, you could at it from that angle

By the later stages of the lesson, Dylan had developed a series of presentation slides complete with a range of encapsulated photographs depicting modern-day Egypt. In the later stages of the lesson he also watches a series of video clips he retrieved on the demonstrations which took place during the 2011 uprising in Egypt, occasionally summoning Tracey's attention when the footage attracts his shock or surprise.

Like Dylan, Rhys quickly established an area of interest on the topic of ancient Egypt, becoming intrigued by precious metals and jewels used to create Tutankhamun's mask. Indeed, during the early stages of the lesson he asks Sandra a number of questions about the details of the mask including its size, method of construction, adornments and material properties. Despite this initial curiosity, after creating a single presentation slide, Rhys declares that he has completed the task and he begins to play computer games, requesting a pair of headphones from his teachers so that he can continue to play in solitude without creating any classroom noise. Although Sandra attempts to redirect him to the presentation topic by suggesting he watch some videos about ancient Egypt (again, we see an attempt to minimise confrontation by reducing the demands of the task i.e. rather than create a presentation, Rhys can now take a more passive viewing role), we still see that Tutankhamun's mask continues to intrigue Rhys:

Rhys: is em Tutankhamun's [mask] big?

Sandra: his tomb?

Rhys: no, his-

Sandra: no, his mask. Well, yes, quite big, it's about this size, like that, and he goes down to mid chest and it's solid gold so god knows how heavy it is

Rhys: (I just) wanna know what gold was worth

In this exchange we see that although Rhys is continuing to pose questions regarding the physical properties of Tutankhamun's mask, by the end of the observation, it still remained to be seen whether this curiosity would evolve into any further learning activities or approaches to the task. For example, it could be argued that any attempt to value Tutankhamun's mask opens up a range of interesting questions regarding different frameworks from which to appraise it e.g. do we consider the original nominal monetary value of the item? Its display value via museum admissions? Or even its barter value as "duplicates" in commercial transactions? And, of course, how do we reflect the more intangible aspects of the item's cultural significance in any attempts to estimate its value? Whether Rhys is on the cusp of taking the presentation task in any such direction remains unseen, however, on this occasion at least, his attention is redirected to a video on the religious and cultural role of the pharaohs' tombs in ancient Egypt.

Over the course of the art lesson, we see quite dramatic transformations in the personal dispositions and learning objectives of pupils as they partake in the classroom activities. For example, while Luke initially sought much guidance on the construction and application of colour to his mask, following his successful rendering of bright blue and green snake-like textures on the body piece of his tribal mask, he deliberates on how he will attach this body piece to himself in order to secure it in the correct location while he wears the mask. He initiates a discussion on this design challenge with the observing researcher and suddenly exclaims his solution before continuing on to consider the subsequent issues this course of action poses:

Luke: Oh my god, I know, we're gonna, I'm gonna make a belt yeh, like a belt

Researcher: That'd be cool,

Luke: oooh: Yeh but how would you get in it?

Researcher: You'd need a thin strip

Luke: Yeh but how would you get in it then?

Researcher: "It might be hard" I think your idea is good there because if its' - if its solid enough and what you could do is, if you use support, so if you put it down- I'll show you here, if I put it down there and you glue it there, (inaudible) to help

Luke: Support, support

Researcher: yeh

Luke: How do you cut this big piece of cardboard?

Researcher: Yeh into strips, ↑Yeh That's a great idea

Luke: Just like that and then-

Researcher: Yeh, and then-

Luke: Do that

Researcher: Perfect, yeh

Luke: That's me support unit

While Luke proposes that he construct a belt using corrugated card in order to secure his mask to his lower body, questions arise regarding how he can ensure that this belt remains firmly bonded to the large body section of his mask. When the researcher points out that smaller strips of card can be used to provide additional support in the form of bracing, Luke quickly sets about cutting some cardboard and successfully attaches his belt to the body section of his mask. However, not only does he successfully solve the design problem he was faced with, it is evident that by describing his completed belt piece as a “support unit”, he is importing terminology and understandings from fields he has expressed a keen interest in – bricklaying and construction. Indeed, because during this lesson, Luke reveals that he wishes to be a bricklayer and work alongside his father, it is very likely that the challenge of attaching his mask’s body piece to his lower body and ensuring it stays in place has been conceived in much the same way as bricklayers must consider the usage of load-bearing metal frames and additional brickwork in order to ensure the structural stability of their works. Moreover, it is likely that the researcher’s deployment of the word “support”, a term which Luke repeats himself as he considers his next line of action, triggers Luke to integrate previously acquired understandings from the field of bricklaying into new, creatively challenging situations.

While Luke’s classroom role changes from one which can be likened to an apprentice who works under the direct tutelage of a skilled, professional artist, to that of a more experienced, collaborating problem-solver; Liam’s disposition also undergoes dramatic change since he had initially been taken out of the classroom by teaching staff for refusing to turn off a computer game in order to participate in the session. When Liam does eventually return to the lesson, he discusses the mask-making objective with the facilitating artist and rather than pursuing a design with a more typical tribal aesthetic (i.e., by employing animal imagery and/or geometric patterns), that Liam would create a more shield-like structure to be worn in order to support the English football team in the 2016 World cup tournament. Being an avid football fan, Liam commenced working alongside the artist, expressing a willingness to attempt to render symbolic imagery of roses for his mask, despite expressing the belief that he was “not good” at art:

Artist: are you gonna do some little roses on it in the middle [of the mask], the English ones, It’s up to you

Researcher: oh yeh

Liam: I can try

Artist: Are you gonna do the lettering

Researcher: you could do printing

Liam: Yeh I’ll do at the top, at the very top there, where you’ve got that space

Indeed, when it comes to verbalising his creative vision for his piece, however, we see that Liam becomes more affirmative and decisive in his stance. Therefore, despite his original resistance to ceasing play on computer games in order to participate in the art lesson, we see that as the visiting artist expresses a willingness to expand the lesson objectives to align more closely with Liam's own particular interests, he becomes more creatively involved in the task of constructing a mask.

While much of the engineering lesson was focused upon the pupils following procedures in order to ensure that they had constructed rockets that would remain intact and withstand the air pressure which would be used to launch them, there were many instances in which pupils attempted to expand beyond the boundaries of the task, especially once outside the classroom in the adjoining basketball court where the launching area had been set up. When here, pupils enquired whether they could try a number of alternative activities including attempting to launch missiles other than those they had created, additional launches of their rockets at different air pressure levels as well as launching their rockets in new directions. In the cases of Matt and Rhys, then, we see that their frustrations during the early stages of the lesson (e.g., both expressed annoyance at the type of music the teacher had selected for the construction phase of the lesson and both expressed anger when their rockets incurred breakages), give way to suggestions that they run initial tests and adopt alternative missiles during the launching phase of the lesson:

Matt: can we use one of my bottles just to test [the rocket]?

Michelle: no we'll do it in there, coz- if you- if you stand in the right place, you'll go quite distance

Rhys: Can we do a bottle for my next turn?

Michelle: We're gonna try and do a bottle we dunno if the diameter's correct or not but we'll eh, we'll give it a go

In the case of Max, we see that his near silence during the construction phase of the lesson gives way to more extended verbal interaction with his teacher via requests and the articulation of his desires for the launching task:

Max: Can I face [the rocket] over that way?

Michelle: If you wish to, see how far you can get it, that's fine

Max: that's what I wanna do, me

Michelle: Yeah, absolutely, that's no problem

Of course, it could be argued that because these attempts at extending the task are all couched in the language of permission-seeking (i.e. *Can I do X?*), nevertheless, it is important to note that they still lead to dialogue which increases the opportunities for learning. Thus, requesting to launch a bottle affords Michelle the opportunity to explain that they need to ensure that the diameter of the bottle neck is sufficiently wide to attach it to the air pump valve and the request to launch their rockets in new directions affords Michelle the opportunity to convey that this decision is dependent upon whether there is sufficient space in that direction in order for the rocket to land. Therefore, it can be argued that in these negotiated attempts by students to seek further agency during the task, a dialogical space opens up in which pupils encounter rationales and explanations that they might not otherwise have encountered if they were to simply remain within the confines of the planned lesson.

### **Relational Agency**

Beyond transgression and transformation as a potential means by which students might secure agency in the classroom, Rainio (2008) also points to the development of agency through co-operative participation and involvement in the classroom. In other words, students gradually accrue more duties and rights as they participate in shared classroom tasks. Moreover, co-operative forms of interaction and positive inter-personal relations between students and teachers can often facilitate the accomplishment of specific end products or learning goals. For Rainio, agency here is something which emerges as pupils gain further understanding, experience, and knowledge of classroom practices and take on increasing levels of responsibility for their own learning. Thus, changes in the positions, tasks, and relations of the pupil to his or her classroom community will form a central focus for the forthcoming analysis.

Since the underlying premise of successful collaborative learning is based upon consensus-building through cooperation between group members and a sharing of responsibility for the groups' actions, the first stage of the analysis of the classroom dialogue for the emergence of affiliative agency focused upon negotiations between students and teachers as they sought to reach a common understanding of learning objectives and classroom tasks, despite working from different expectations of classroom norms. In the ICT class it was observed that although some students were willing to individually negotiate the meaning of words and phrases that they did not understand, the requirements of the presentation task as well as

the visual stimuli provided by the teacher in order to introduce this task (refer to section on student questions), the kind of negotiation adopted here remains at a hierarchical level whereby the teacher's role is to provide knowledge and structure the task and the students' role is to consume this knowledge and work to comply with teacher demands. As a result, we see little to no interaction between students as they work on their presentation tasks and even when their teacher attempts to facilitate an exchange of ideas between students, she clearly struggles. Indeed, in the example below, in response to Max's self-imposed isolation from his teacher and peers, Sandra attempts to stimulate his thinking around the task on ancient Egypt by encouraging him to observe the efforts of his peers:

Sandra: do you want to have a look at ehmm- just open your eyes and see what Rhys is looking at, see if there is anything that interests you, see look at these, these are things they wore when they were alive and eh. Like the, gold kind of eh body armour are laced with jewels and things

While Max eventually uncrosses his arms, lifts his head from his desk and begins to tentatively observe the work of his peers, he remains largely silent for the remainder of the task, refuses to explain his on-going silence to his teachers and fails to conduct any research on ancient Egypt. Thus it is clear that although the teaching staff are aware of the potential for peer interaction to provide a stimulus for the development of classroom agency, in practice, it becomes very difficult to generate.

In contrast, in the later stages of both the engineering and art lessons, we see the spontaneous emergence of a more collective formulation of the learning tasks, so that the language of the students shifts from the deployment of forms to suggest the individual self, towards forms which suggest a common group identity. For example, As Max seeks guidance from his teacher on the most desirable level of air pressure to use when launching his rocket, both Matt and Rhys become involved in preparations for the launch by spontaneously volunteering to watch the pressure dial and take charge over certain technical procedures:

Max: What should I put [the rocket] on?  
Michelle: Eh, As much as you want, so on here there's a dial that goes 0, 1,2,3, don't go beyond 3 and a half bar, so whatever you'd like Max, you choose  
Matt: Watching it going off now  
Rhys: Are we turning the key off?  
Michelle: Yeh:, good thinking Rhys

In the above exchange, we also see that although the model rocket to be launched was individually-constructed by Max, we see that for Rhys, launching this model has become a

collective task. Therefore, even though Rhys has taken responsibility for turning the key needed to charge the capacitor for the release of the air pressure, he still addresses the group with an inclusive 'we' question before taking action. Likewise, during the construction of Liam's mask, we see a similar deployment of collective pronouns when referring to the various actions required to bring the creative task to completion:

Artist: So do we- we need to join your headband and make some eyes so that you can see where you're going. Come over here and you can use the glue gun.

Liam: I need to get the roses on

Researcher: Right ehmmm

Liam: I'll finish this next week

Researcher: you could yeh

Artist: Do you wanna fix it on, I'd like to see you stand up in it

Liam: nah, I'm finishing it next week

Luke: nah!

Researcher: Get the structure finished while we have the glue gun, we won't have the glue gun next week

Luke: Liam, it's easy: lad, just pull up them bands

Liam: Go ahead

Luke: Just put the band on

Liam: No, coz I want to do the roses as well

Artist: We can do those after

Liam: We're supposed to do seven roses lad

Luke: you don't

Liam: you do

Artist: So right look at me, if we use the full width for the top of the shield, it'll be that big, what do reckon, do you want it that big?

Liam: Eh, we should do it on that card. Walk around-

Interestingly, we see that once Liam decides he would prefer to complete his mask in the next art lesson, he is quickly confronted with Luke's disapproval which then gives way to team reassurances and directions. Once Luke asserts that assembling the mask will be 'easy' and instructs Liam to attach some bands to his shield, we see that Liam swiftly invites him to demonstrate this process. When Liam changes his mind as he wishes to create some rose motifs to adorn his shield, this creates disagreement between the students to which the artist responds by redirecting Liam's attention to the overall structure of his shield. By taking collective responsibility for the completion of Liam's mask and communicating the various options that are available to him in order to reach completion, the group arrive at a successful compromise by permitting Liam to express his design objectives and working alongside him in order to devise the various different components required in order to realise his ideals.

Not all classroom dialogue, however, involves negotiation between teachers and students as they work co-operatively on various problem-solving tasks. In fact, as Schleff points out, the context of the classroom frequently serves to constrain the kinds of interaction between participating pupils and teachers, because, like most institutional settings, schools are typically governed by policies and practices that position teachers and students in accordance with a range of different social expectations in respect of their social roles. In particular, classroom activities often operate via informational monologues from teaching staff as well as the more interactional medium of questions and answers amongst students. Indeed, Schleff (2008) goes on to argue, that the former mode of communication (i.e., the informational monologue) often constrains the extent to which more cooperative, facilitative, and affiliative types of discourse can emerge since students have reduced opportunities to speak. Of course, it is possible that in some instances, informational monologue may be used as a substitute for student participation, particularly in cases where teacher elicitation is greeted with no response.

Nevertheless, if we return to the patterns of verbal interaction as outlined in Table 6.1 in Chapter 6, we see that irrespective of cause, the verbal interaction in the ICT class was more dominated by teaching staff than was the case in art and Engineering. Indeed, in the case of the former, we find more frequent instances of the teacher taking “long informational turns” (i.e., long segments of text where there is no interruption or change in speaker) in order to present facts to the group on the topic of ancient Egypt. It has been noted, however, that despite an informational focus teachers often adopt more interactional and cooperative speech styles when there is a disruption to the flow of information, for example, during classroom breaks. Interestingly, because the students in the ICT class work independently for the majority of the observed lesson, we see no such opportunity arise. In fact, even when the teacher attempts to make a departure from the content of the lesson by opening up a conversation on the subject of breakfast as the students are working, she is apprehended, albeit with mockery as one student imitates a teacher shushing his/her students:

Sandra: mmm that toast was good this morning  
Student: Shhhh!

During the Engineering and Art lessons, however, as students work on their creations, free conversation on topics beyond the lesson aims arise more frequently and indeed, we see a more a more personal investment in kinds of information offered by students during these conversations. For example, in the exchange between Matt and the teaching assistant



during the Engineering lesson presented below, Matt offers insights into his family life as he constructs his model rocket:

Michelle: it's looking secure, but there's quite a lot of pressure on the rocket launcher, I wonder whether it's worth bracing it over the top with a strip of paper, you might get away with it Matt, then again, you may well not, and then just throw your rubbish in the bin, nice and tidy  
Tracey: rubbish in the bin  
Matt: our Lewis is getting braces soon  
Liz: your Lewis is?  
Matt: getting braces  
Liz: right↑. Is he gonna get them coloured braces?  
Matt: mmm yeh  
Michelle: it's quite trendy isn't it to have braces nowadays  
Matt: he's getting red ones  
Liz: is he? To support his football team? (laughter)

Similarly, as Luke and Liam work alongside the artist when constructing their masks, they keenly reveal some of their technical abilities and future career plans:

Artist: My husband's building a shed at the minute  
Luke: I can build  
Liam: If he's got like an xbox or anything, I can fix it  
Artist: If he's what sorry?  
Liam: more like x-box, more like consoles and that, I can fix that  
Artist: we've got loads of stuff  
Liam: and then you can get (inaudible) for it  
Luke: yeh that's what I wanna do, I wanna be a brickie when I'm older because me dad's a brickie  
Liam: I'm gonna be a sportsperson or-

Rather than being confined to the more institutional roles of teacher and student, it is clear that in the exchanges above, the participants are drawing upon wider social identities e.g. family roles, occupations, abilities and interests. In fact, Cordella (2004) argues that this broader range of conversational topics can help to draw classroom members closer together because it temporarily reduces the power differentials between them since neither party is assumed to have a greater amount of expertise in matters arising within the realms of personal experience. In addition, Stephenson and Deasy (2005) argue that instances such as these constitute a "third space" in the classroom since students' can integrate their lived experiences with school learning and make personally meaningful connections to the curriculum.

## 7.5 Discussion

The aim of the research presented above was to investigate manifestations of student agency across three different lessons by applying Rainio's (2008) classificatory scheme to transcribed verbal data from three lessons (art, engineering, and ICT), all of which took place in the Ashwick centre between late June and early July 2014. To this end, two main research questions were considered : a) Do patterns of agentic action amongst students vary between lessons? b) What information do variations in these patterns found convey about teacher-student relations across the lessons observed? This discussion section will draw upon the findings of the analysis in order to consider each of these questions in turn.

Table 7.2 presents a summary overview of the findings for each subject across each of the agency constructs that were examined as part of the present research.

**Table 7.2**

*Patterns of student agency across subject lessons*

Lesson	Levels of agentic student dialogue	Relations	Transgressions	Transformations
ICT	Generally Low	Minimal peer interaction	Indirect, unresolved	Uncertain
Engineering	Varied	Collective, personal investments	Direct, partially resolved	Dramatic
Art	Generally high	Collective, personal investments	Indirect, resolved	Dramatic

The content analysis of the verbal data revealed the ICT lesson as the most distinctive lesson of the three subjects examined since the total levels of text coded for each form of agentic participation in ICT were considerably lower than those in Art and Engineering. The content analysis findings also revealed a substantial degree of variation between individual students in terms of how frequently their verbal exchanges were coded as manifesting agency. This finding is consistent with Clarke, Howley, Resnick and Rosés' (2016) finding of wide variations in verbal contributions from individual students when they examined patterns of participation amongst a group of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students (ages 14-15) in their biology lessons in their lessons. By drawing on the work of Rainio (2008), the present analysis was also able to

demonstrate that transgressive verbal exchanges were much less frequent than those of a relational or transformative kind. In Lehtonen's analysis of expressions of student agency over the course of a drama education project, incidences where levels of transgression exceeded levels of harmonious classroom relations were identified as crisis points. Given the low levels of transgression in the present analysis, it might well be concluded, that a more stable set of classroom relations was evident across all three lessons. However, the critical incident analyses pointed to some further nuances between the three lessons which is worth taking into consideration.

Like the content analysis of the verbal data, the critical incident analysis also pointed towards the ICT lesson as the most distinctive lesson of the three subjects examined. This was because unlike the art and engineering lessons, it was difficult to judge the level of rapport between students in ICT since little to no verbal interaction was found between students as they worked on their presentation tasks. In addition, classroom talk was often characterised by the teacher's more lengthy informational monologues and staff in this lesson clearly struggled to facilitate ideas exchanges between students. As staff sometimes had difficulties encouraging students to participate in this lesson, there were times where the demands of the lesson were reduced for those who were not co-operating. Nevertheless, the type of resistance met by teaching staff in this lesson was characterised by more indirect attempts to subvert the classroom order e.g. through silence or diverting attention away from the classroom project and towards alternative leisure activities. It is perhaps unsurprising then, that developments in the pupils' general classroom dispositions during the ICT lesson were somewhat uncertain. For example, while Dylan successfully created a presentation comparing life in ancient Egypt with life in the UK, Max sustained his social withdrawal from classroom activities for the entire duration of the lesson while Rhys alternated between developing a short presentation, playing computer games and watching videos on Ancient Egypt.

Unlike the ICT lesson, free conversation on personal experiences and topics beyond the themes of the lesson arose more frequently as students worked on their creations in both the Engineering and Art lessons. It was argued that such instances demonstrate that rather than being confined to the more institutional roles of teacher and student, the participants in these lessons were drawing upon wider social identities e.g. family roles, occupations, abilities and interests. In the later stages of both lessons, we also saw the spontaneous

emergence of a more collective formulation of the learning tasks, so that the language of the students shifted from the deployment of forms to suggest the individual self, towards forms which suggest a common group identity. In addition, during both lessons, we see quite dramatic transformations in the personal dispositions and learning objectives of pupils as they partake in the classroom activities. In the art lesson, Luke's classroom role changes from one which was likened to an apprentice working under the tutelage of a professional artist, to that of a more experienced, collaborating problem-solver; while Liam's initial resistance to participating in the lesson, gives way to more creative involvement in designing and collaborating with others to deliver his own particular response to the mask-making task. Meanwhile, in engineering, we see a shift from pupils following procedures in order to ensure that they construct robust rockets that would be fit for launching, towards attempts to expand beyond the boundaries of the launch task by experimenting with a number of alternative launching procedures. Like Damsa, Kirchner, Andriessen, Erkens and Sins (2010), we also see here that it is possible to draw a distinction between actions which serve to regulate the students' activities (i.e. following procedures, obligations to participate and following expert guidance) and those which are more centred around the students contributing to the construction of knowledge (problem-solving, designing art objects, experimenting with launch procedures).

Although the art and engineering lessons shared several features in common, the analysis of the verbal data also revealed more subtle differences between them with respect to manifestations of student resistance. While the engineering lesson saw more frequent and direct forms of resistance, the art lesson was characterised by forms of student resistance which were less frequent and more indirect. Indeed, in the engineering lesson, we saw a particularly direct form of confrontation adopted by Rhys with teaching staff being persistently challenged for the seeming contradictions in their behaviours. In the art lesson, however, the analysis demonstrated that Luke's reluctance to continue with the art activity was more benign since it came after a period of sustained creative effort on his behalf. Indeed, his protests were much easier to resolve since technical suggestions enabled him to promptly resume his work. In the case of the engineering lesson, however, no clear-cut resolutions to the issues identified by Rhys were forthcoming. Although he protests that his teachers were more interested in reprimanding him for swearing than they were in listening to details of the technical problems he was experiencing, at no point do we see any negotiations around the school's policies on unacceptable classroom language. Nor do we

witness any apologies from either party. Nevertheless, by offering Rhys assistance and the opportunity to return to the classroom to mend his model rocket, we do see a renewed commitment on behalf of Michelle, the engineering teacher, to provide students with options and opportunities to enhance their learning. An alternative reading of this situation is that by redirecting Rhys' attention to the task at hand, Michelle is attempting to avoid a further escalation in the conflict. In any event, the analysis demonstrates that the unfolding of student resistance is not always characterised by escalation in conflict, further negotiations or even constructive resolutions – they may also be characterised by diversions, uncertainties and an ongoing sense of ambiguity.

While Rainio (2008), Malin (2012), and Lehtonen (2015) have all demonstrated that once teachers carefully listen to their students and adapt their practice to address their concerns and issues, levels of resistance in the classroom decrease thus leaving space for more constructive interactions; this analysis shows that in some cases, teachers may face little resistance from students and in others, student resistance can be temporarily quelled through diversions rather than resolved to a state of closure. Interestingly, elsewhere, Rainio and Marjanovic-Shane (2013) have argued that rather than regarding the ambivalent nature of the latter instances as a negative, paralyzing force, such instances should also be recognized as a potentially positive force for transformation and increased agency amongst students. This is because if signs of ambivalence are taken seriously and recognized as legitimate, (i.e., that the person's struggle with disparate, conflicting discourses from different "worlds" are recognized), then this may create opportunities for openings for personal transformation. So to consider the example outlined above, in future, Rhys' teachers might reflect on whether the need to listen to students might be prioritized over the need to enforce the schools' behaviour code while Rhys himself might reflect on whether the language he chooses to express his anger is necessary or effective when attempting to elicit help from others.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

The research presented in this chapter examined manifestations of students' agency across three different subject lessons. It yielded insights about the variety of ways in which students contribute to the ongoing flow of action when participating in everyday classroom activities such as making art works, constructing and testing model rockets and creating powerpoint presentations. Although there was a substantial degree of variation between individual

students in terms of how frequently their verbal exchanges could be characterized as agentic, there were also notable differences in the manner in which student agency was enacted across each of the observed lessons. While the ICT lesson was distinct in its minimal peer-interaction and the uncertain nature of the students' learning and development; the art and engineering lessons were united by instances of collective action, personal investments in classroom dialogue and dramatic transformations in students' approach to tasks as they participated in the lessons. Beyond this, the art lesson emerged as unique for its low levels of student resistance which were promptly resolved upon further technical assistance. Arriving at clear-cut resolutions in response to student resistance in the engineering and ICT lessons, however, proved more difficult for staff at the Ashwick. As a result, the present research suggests that another fruitful area for inquiry lies in investigating the potentials, limitations, and challenges that teachers encounter when trying to create spaces for students to act agentially when participating in learning tasks and classroom activities.

## **7.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has reported the results of a series of analyses of verbal classroom data which were conducted in order to investigate the ways in which student agency were manifested in a mask-making workshop and in two other subject lessons (ICT and Engineering). Audio transcripts of in-class communication between students and teachers within these three lessons were compared using Rainio's (2008) conceptual framework for the analysis of student agency. A substantial degree of variation was found between individual students with respect to the extent to which their verbal exchanges could be characterized as agentic. Nevertheless, there were also notable differences in the manner in which student agency was enacted across each of the observed lessons. The ICT lesson was distinct in its minimal peer-interaction and the uncertain nature of the students' learning and development, while the art and engineering lessons were united by instances of collective action, personal investments in classroom dialogue and dramatic transformations in students' approach to tasks as they participated in the lessons. The art lesson emerged as unique for its low levels of student resistance which were promptly resolved upon further technical assistance. It was argued that the research presented in this chapter helps to contribute to our understanding of the dynamic and emergent nature of agency as students participate in classroom activities.

## **Chapter 8 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter is to position the findings, reported in Chapters 4-7, in relation to the existing literature reported in Chapters 1-3. This chapter is organised into three main sections. Section 8.1 presents a review and summary of the main findings. The Section 8.2 elaborates on one of the primary meta-themes which traverses the four main sets of findings which have been presented in this thesis. Section 8.3 considers the limitations of the present research and suggests potential avenues for future research. Section 8.4 considers the practical implications arising from this research.

### **8.1 Summary of Results**

This thesis aimed to investigate the concept of learner engagement by critically evaluating a visual arts initiative within the context of a PRU, which was referred to throughout as “The Ashwick”. It considered what “engagement” means for the purposes of a piece of applied educational research and drew upon both SDT and CHAT perspectives to investigate various intrapersonal, interpersonal and environmental dimensions of engagement processes.

The research findings presented in this thesis began in Chapter 4 with a consideration of the wider social context surrounding the PRU where the art initiative was implemented. The findings outlined in this chapter proceeded with an examination the basic institutional structure and everyday practices that take place at the “Ashwick centre”, continued with an SDT-informed exploration of five teachers’ perspectives on their work, and concluded with an activity systems analysis to identify the school’s central activities with respect to the wider set of relationships, histories and expectations surrounding them.

The first set of findings set out in Chapter 4 demonstrated that the Ashwick had developed a broad array of educational objectives around academic skills, vocational training and skills for social and emotional wellbeing. The SDT-informed investigation of staff views in Section 4 revealed that despite their perceived ability to make effective use of educational tools and practices to develop a more harmonious and stable set of classroom relations, it was evident that some of the staff at the Ashwick viewed their attempts to develop students’ levels competence and autonomy as marked by greater degrees of difficulty. Finally, the activity systems analysis presented in Section 4.3.3 suggested that educational practice at the

Ashwick takes place within and between two activity systems: the provision of respite for students and preparation for their timely reintegration back into mainstream school. Overall, the research presented in Chapter 4 revealed a substantial degree of dissonance between staff beliefs regarding effective and worthwhile working practices and their interpretation of the demands made within educational policy and by management teams.

Chapter 5 moved on to consider the perspectives of five of the students who participated in the art initiative (ages 13-14). An SDT perspective was adopted to consider the extent to which the students' perceived their general educational environment as either supporting or undermining their basic psychological needs. A CHAT perspective was then employed to examine interview data for the participating students' views on what they regarded as producing favourable conditions for the achievement their own personal aims during school activities.

The SDT analysis of both the interview and questionnaire data revealed clear differences between participants in relation to their basic attitudes towards the Ashwick as well as their perceived levels of competence and relatedness. However, the interviews also revealed a certain level of ambiguity around issues of student autonomy since the participating students demonstrated a simultaneous awareness of the necessity of classroom co-operation to gain skills for future life as well as the constraints this sometimes placed upon their more immediate desires to disregard the classroom rules in favour of more leisurely pursuits. The CHAT analysis employed Hirschman's (1983) classificatory scheme to identify the different ways in which classroom activities were perceived by the participating students. The interview data revealed that while one student appreciated the chance to become absorbed in creative tasks during art sessions, for others, the same activities offered a means to divert attention away from more unpleasant school experiences or to achieve other personal priorities, such as gaining the respect of teachers, taking the opportunity to socialize with friends, expressing one's sense of a humour or increasing academic attainment. These findings suggested that participating students were not a homogenous group in terms of their needs and were approaching classroom activities on the basis of rather different mind-sets.

Chapter 6 commenced the SDT analysis of some of the more immediate features of day-to-day lessons at the Ashwick. To this end, a series of classroom observations were conducted



to compare the extent to which pupils' psychological needs were being supported and acted upon within a mask-making workshop which was delivered as part of the present art initiative, and two other subject lessons which formed part of the regular timetable at the Ashwick - ICT and engineering. The three sessions were compared using a classroom observation schedule and by analyzing audio transcripts of in-class communication between students and teachers.

The analysis of this data revealed that levels of observed needs support and needs satisfaction behaviours were highest in art, intermediate in engineering and lowest in ICT. Substantial differences were found between the behaviours of students and teachers in the ICT lesson when compared with those taking place within art and engineering. While the latter two lessons shared several features in common, the analysis also revealed a number of more subtle differences between them. While the ICT teacher provided students with detailed instructions in discrete stages, moderated direct commands with polite expressions and focused feedback upon the pupils' efforts; the art teacher adopted a more authorial role during her lesson, explaining her thought process as she worked alongside the pupils, framing direct commands within more collaborative endeavours and offering praise in more elaborated forms by focusing on the technical details of the students' designs. In addition, students participating in the art lesson were unique in seeking feedback from the visiting artist on their work, while in ICT, permission-seeking was the dominant question form. It was argued that one of the primary differences between the artist and the ICT and engineering teachers, was that rather than relying upon a more formal kind of authority that is frequently bestowed upon teaching professionals, the artist possessed more of an expert status among the participating students by virtue of her skills and experience as a professional illustrator.

Chapter 7 continued the analysis of the classroom observational data which was initially presented in Chapter 6, but this time employing a CHAT perspective to consider manifestations student agency across the three lessons. Audio transcripts of in-class communication between students and teachers were compared using Rainio's (2008) conceptual framework for the analysis of student agency. A substantial degree of variation was found between individual students with respect to the extent to which their verbal exchanges could be characterized as agentic. Nevertheless, there were also notable differences in the manner in which student agency was enacted across each of the observed

lessons. The ICT lesson was distinct in its minimal peer-interaction and the uncertain nature of the students' learning and development, while the art and engineering lessons were united by instances of collective action, personal investments in classroom dialogue and dramatic transformations in students' approach to tasks as they participated in the lessons. Again, the art lesson emerged as unique for its low levels of student resistance which were promptly resolved upon further technical assistance.

## **8.2 Meta-thematic Analysis**

As the key findings summarised above in Section 8.1 indicate, the data collected for this thesis research was analysed separately in four different components in order to produce four individual sets of findings. Nevertheless, when outlining the methodology for the research in Chapter 3, it was argued that by considering different perspectives on engagement and incorporating data generated using multiple methods, our prospects are enhanced for the broadening as well as deepening our understanding of the interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics underlying pupil engagement. Consequently, this section will move from separate examinations of the findings related to each set of SDT and CHAT constructs, towards a consideration of what Farmer, Robinson, Elliott and Eyles (2006) call the "meta-themes" that cut across these findings.

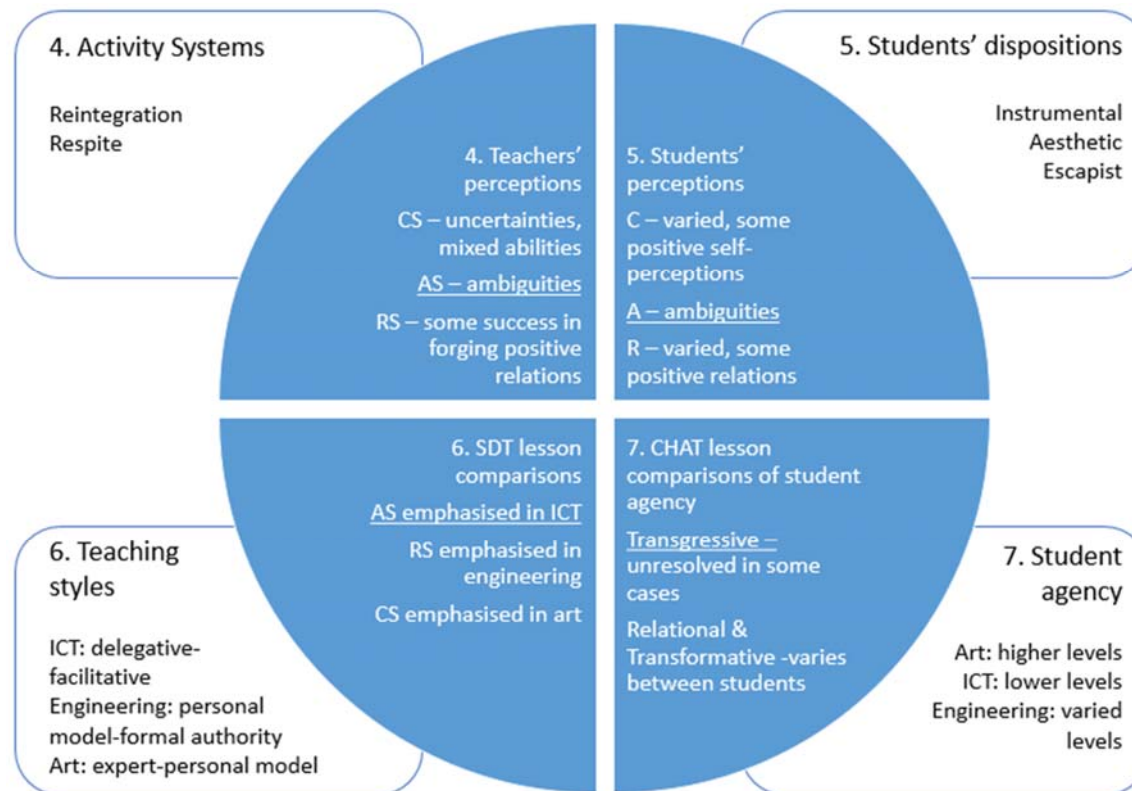
In order to consider the various sets of findings from a more global perspective, Figure 8.1 displays the findings emerging from each component of the research within a single matrix in order to consider where there is convergences and divergences between these findings. Figure 8.1 depicts four outer white boxes which outline the key findings for the more fine-grained conceptual and contextual content underpinning the four main research analyses presented in this thesis. The blue circle intersecting these boxes is made up of quadrants, each containing summaries of the key converging findings across the four analyses. While three of the quadrants (i.e. the lighter blue quadrants) outline findings on the students' basic psychological needs, the remaining quadrant (i.e. the dark blue quadrant) outlines the findings on student agency. The basic needs findings are more readily comparable with each other, as, from an SDT perspective, the need for competence, relatedness and autonomy are considered universal. However, the findings on student agency can be seen as largely complementing those on the basic needs, as in the case of relatedness and relational agency, there is a mutual emphasis upon co-operative classroom interactions and in the case of competence and transformative agency, there is a mutual emphasis upon being effective

within one's learning environment. Indeed, we see that teachers' views on the degree to which they are able to support competence and relatedness varies, much like their students' perceptions of their individual strengths with respect to their school subjects and interpersonal relationships. Indeed, we also see that when student-teacher interactions are compared across three subject lessons, there was a relatively different emphasis on each of the basic needs within each, with relatedness support being at the centre of the observed classroom action in engineering and competence being at the centre of the observed classroom action in art. Likewise, it was found that the degrees to which transformative and relational agency were manifested in the behaviours of individual students varied widely across the groups.

Nevertheless, the ambiguities surrounding students' autonomy and unresolved issues around transgressive assertions of their agency prompts further deliberation. Indeed, one of the most fraught areas of practice to emerge from the staff interviews outlined in Chapter 4, were attempts to foster a more autonomous approach to learning amongst students. Ashwick staff revealed that because they found it difficult to rely on groups of students to co-operate and work independently, they sometimes adopted teaching strategies which they considered as less than ideal such as diverting students' attention with more leisurely activities or attempting to contain negative feelings rather than resolve ongoing problems. Moreover, in Chapter 5, the interview data revealed a simultaneous awareness of the benefits of school and the constraints that this sometimes places upon attendees among some of the student interviewees. However, for these students, a complete freedom from such constraints, was never proposed as a solution to this mixed state of affairs. Indeed, even when certain freedoms are granted during lessons (i.e. the opportunity to choose a presentation topic, the opportunity to decide upon the sources of information to use in these presentations, the opportunity to decide upon the course of action to be taken during the lesson), the outcomes for students are far from certain.

**Figure 8.1**

*Summary of main findings presented in Chapters 4-7*



*Note: C = Competence, A = Autonomy, R = Relatedness, S = Support; underlined text indicates meta-theme for consideration.*

In Chapter 6, the classroom observations revealed that where students were granted the most autonomy (i.e. during the observed ICT lesson). This was also the lesson where levels of observed competence support, competence satisfaction, relatedness support and relatedness satisfaction were lowest. Furthermore, the analysis of student agency in Chapter 7 revealed that this lesson was also characterised by comparably lower levels of observed student agency with staff sometimes encountering difficulties when attempting to encourage students to participate. In addition, developments in the students' learning were marked by a certain degree of uncertainty since classroom contributions ranged widely from successfully completed creations to unresolved, sustained silences.

When attempting to explain these ambiguities and uncertainties, it is useful to return to the more fine-grained details as outlined in the boxes in Figure 8.1 in order to consider whether there are any disjunctures between the findings. Indeed, in Chapter 4, it was found that as the interviewed teachers at the Ashwick worked towards the twin goals of providing respite for students, as well as preparing them for a swift return to mainstream school, they were sometimes pulled in directions which they perceived as incompatible. In fact, tensions between whether staff should prioritise academic, vocational or leisurely pursuits were particularly evident. Nevertheless, when considering the students' views on their education as outlined in Chapter 5, it is noteworthy that at no point did the interviewed students articulate their orientations towards classroom participation in these "respite/reintegration" terms. Rather their concerns were grounded more in their immediate, everyday classroom circumstances, so that activities were deemed favourable in some cases if they provided a means of escape from less desirable activities, while in others, classroom tasks were considered with respect to whether they provided opportunities for sensory stimulation, or for other social gains, such as commanding the respect of the teacher or entertaining peers. While certain student dispositions might align quite neatly with the objectives of the respite/reintegration systems (e.g., alternative activities provided in the school's nurture room as a form of respite might cohere with an escapist disposition), how staff respond in cases where students have developed dispositions which are not particularly compatible with either of the school's activity systems, remains negotiable.

Therefore, it is argued that, above all, the findings from the classroom observations outlined in chapters 6 and 7, draw attention to the variety of ways in which teaching staff are attempting to acknowledge their students' agency, but without divesting them of support

for their basic psychological needs. Indeed, while Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, and Ryan (1981) have proposed that teachers tend to have a general orientation toward dealing with students that could be viewed as ranging from being supportive of autonomy to being controlling, in Chapter 6, it was suggested that the strategies used at the Ashwick were more nuanced. Consequently, we see that where the engineering teacher adopts a teaching style which blends personal modelling with more formal expressions of authority, we see that, likewise, the manifestations of student agency in this lesson are a rather equal mix of co-operative contributions and more direct forms of resistance to the ongoing learning activity. Meanwhile in the ICT lesson, while the teacher's facilitative-delegative approach is met with low levels of student resistance, this is accompanied by very low levels of student agency of any kind.

The success of the art lesson in terms of the comparably higher levels of self-determined and agentic behaviour amongst participating students poses some insights for future practice. In contrast to the Ashwick's teachers, it was noted in Chapter 4, that the freelance artist who delivered the mask-making workshop finds that she is relatively free from the ongoing surveillance of record-keeping and teaching practice that is faced by full-time school staff. This is because her role often involves offering students a new creative experience in an alternative environment on a fixed, short-term basis. It was found that this status was perceived by the artist as particularly liberating since she was relatively free from the emotional strain and institutional pressures that full-time teachers often faced in order to ensure that their students are making sufficient levels of academic progress. Indeed, unlike several of the staff employed directly by the Ashwick, who lamented their diminished capacity to influence school decisions, the visiting artist considered her practice as one which she can actively direct, through an open process of "negotiation" with schools and by tailoring her activities with respect to the particular level and interests of the groups she works with. The observation of the mask-making workshop at the Ashwick demonstrated that by focusing upon collaboration and the more technical elements of creative tasks, the visiting artist took on the status of an "expert" during the session and was able to temporarily sidestep the stark choice that full-time teaching staff sometimes face between granting psychological freedom and de-escalating tensions to maintain classroom control.

### 8.3 Limitations and Implications for Future Research

There are a number of limitations underpinning the present research which warrant further reflection. Firstly, like any small-scale mixed methods study, the present findings cannot be taken as representative of institutional relations between groups of teachers and students in similar educational environments. Rather, the present findings highlight the dynamics underlying a particular educational setting at a specific point in time and under certain political, economic and material conditions. In addition, because the data obtained for analysis were grounded in singular moments in time (i.e., cross-sectional questionnaire and interview data; observations of individual lessons) it was not possible to examine the longer term impact of the events that were selected for analysis. Consequently, there remains a task for future research to investigate how perceptions of educational environments and critical moments in classroom, such as those examined in this thesis, develop over time. Notwithstanding this task for future research, the present research indicates that classroom events had a proximal impact on the nature of the students' participation and that salient moments of the kind which emerged in the art lessons were pivotal for students who participated in them.

Secondly, the present study did not examine certain social and inter-personal factors which might produce the variance in how individual teachers and students view their school environment. Some plausible sources of these differences could be the individual's home environment (e.g., the orientations of friends and family toward school) and/or past experiences in school. In the case of students, for example, the views of significant others potentially represent a powerful long-term influence on how young people organize and interpret the world around them. In addition, as Ryan and Grolnick (1986) point out, individual differences in what students and teachers perceive and/or expect from their school environment may also result in transactional effects, so that the individual is differentially treated within a given context. The sources of these individual differences in student and teachers' perceptions is therefore another fruitful area for further inquiry.

Thirdly, because SDT research using observational methods is scarce, the in-class coding schedule presented in Chapter 6 deliberately limited the extent to which interferences are made by the researcher with respect to classroom behaviours. Consequently, the salience of particular classroom actions and events for participants was not incorporated into the

analysis. In future research, it would be of interest to investigate this by complementing observational research findings with data from interviews, self-report questionnaires and video-stimulated recall to provide information on the students' and teachers' own perceptions in order to deepen our understanding of classroom contexts. For example, in a recent SDT observational study in the domain of sport, Smith et al. (2015) used a potency rating scale to capture the psychological meaning of the environment created by coaches working with young athletes.

Fourthly, the failure of the SDT questionnaire to clearly discriminate between all six of the operationalised SDT constructs on respondents' basic psychological needs, calls for further consideration. It may have been the case that some items were worded in ways which were confusing for participants while others may not have pertained directly enough to the construct under examination. At the same time, it is worth considering other researchers' attempts to validate questionnaires incorporating a range of basic needs constructs since the literature here is far from conclusive. For example, the failure of the items operationalised for the autonomy construct to emerge as a single factor is consistent with many studies which find moderate to high inter-correlations between questionnaire items designed to measure autonomy and those of other SDT needs constructs (e.g., Hodge, Lonsdale & Jackson, 2009; Standage, Duda & Ntoumanis, 2003; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon & Filak, 2008). Similarly, in terms of needs support, the failure of the pilot questionnaire data to differentiate between competence support, autonomy support and relatedness support, is also consistent with pre-existing research in the field. For example, questionnaire research by both Diseth, Danielsen and Samdal (2012) and Shen, Li, Sun and Rukavina (2010) found inter-correlations between the items used to measure different needs support constructs. Nevertheless, because SDT specifies that the three needs function separately and combine additively to influence student outcomes, the lack of a consistent pattern of dimensionality within the questionnaire data across a large section of the empirical literature raises serious questions as regards the interpretation of the relationship between and across these basic needs.

Fifthly, because the setting for the case study analysis was defined in more localised institutional terms, as a "Pupil Referral Unit", and the analytical frameworks applied were restricted to those of CHAT and SDT, the scope of the literature consulted in the discussion of the findings in chapters 4-7 was more restricted than might have otherwise been the case had alternative terms and analytical approaches been used. For example, if the case setting



was defined more broadly as an example of an arts-based initiative with a group of young people on the margins of mainstream education and the analysis was more explicitly grounded in the data (as opposed to informed by specific theoretical frameworks), then an alternative set of literature and analyses might have been more deeply considered. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that significant bodies of literature have emerged via such channels. For example, much research has been conducted on the role of the arts with groups of children and young people whom have been characterised as “vulnerable” and/or “at risk”, this includes children in England who are being looked after by local state authorities in foster or residential care. (Sellman, 2012; Sellman, 2015; Maddock, Drummond, Koralek and Nathan, 2007), young people in Australia living in communities marked by high levels of unemployment, serving custodial sentences and living in community housing following a custodial sentence (O’Brien, 2004) and young people living in economically and socially deprived urban areas in the USA, UK and Canada (Hiatt & Kushner, 2013; Crath, 2017)

#### **8.4 Contributions**

At the outset of this thesis (Section 1.1.3) it was argued that it is possible to trace a certain amount of uncertainty with respect to what counts as desirable educational practice within PRUs in England and Wales. It was shown that guidance in government policy reports range widely; from those emphasizing more personalized and flexible curriculum options, to those suggesting the value of a more vocational approach as well as those which stress the importance of a return to a more conventional, academic focus. On top of this, relatively little research has been conducted on the views of PRU teachers and students themselves as regards their experiences and thoughts on what practices work and what more is needed. In addition, of those evaluations of educational initiatives that have been conducted within this environment, most are purely attitudinal and retrospective in scope, and do not incorporate evidence arising from more immediate and situated forms of analysis.

Amidst this ongoing uncertainty and limited research, this thesis makes a relevant contribution towards building an evidence base on educational practice in PRUs as it has critically evaluated a visual arts initiative within the context of a PRU catering for KS3 and KS4 students in the North-west of England. More specifically, it has investigated a range of

intrapersonal and interpersonal processes surrounding the concept of learner engagement by triangulating two key perspectives in the psychology of education:

1. The SDT proposition that school contexts influence engagement by either supporting or undermining learners' basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness
2. The CHAT proposition that understandings of young peoples' engagement in education are culturally embedded and vary across different educational contexts and sets of inter-personal relations

The present investigation of the perspectives and behaviours of staff and students from an SDT perspective has been theoretically useful, because although SDT takes a universalistic stance in positing the same set of needs in all humans, it still retains a more particularistic stance in relation to the capacity of different environments to fulfil these needs. Despite this theoretical commitment to particularism, the review of the SDT literature in Section 2.3.6 demonstrated that SDT research in the field of education tends to be conducted using large-scale samples of students in mainstream schools, using student self-report questionnaires. Therefore, by employing SDT in the present context and developing an observational coding schedule based upon its key propositions (see Chapter 6 for observational findings and results), this thesis has taken the opportunity to extend the current programme of SDT research in education beyond mainstream settings into alternative educational environments and beyond a heavy reliance on retrospective accounts towards the incorporation of more situated analyses. Indeed, by employing SDT perspectives on the basic psychological needs in this way, substantial differences were found between individual students with respect to their competence and relatedness needs. However, this research also revealed that there are still many outstanding questions as regards supporting their autonomy. While these findings do not imply that one should simply deny that autonomy as a basic human need, nor do they suggest that the teachers in this setting were not committed to enhancing this particular psychological need amongst their students, they do invite further critical reflection. It is precisely at this point, that the theoretical contributions of the CHAT perspective can be most keenly discerned.

In Section 2.3.12 it was pointed out the CHAT approach to social and psychological research has been criticized for not making any specific predictions with regard to how activity systems develop and how patterns of engagement evolve over time. This research thesis demonstrates that although no specific predictions are embedded within the CHAT perspective on engagement in learning, this theoretical perspective still retains an important analytical role due to the emphasis it places on socially situated relations and its potential to direct our attention towards possible oversights in existing theories. Indeed, by considering phenomena such as the interplay between the school's reintegration and respite activity systems (see Section 4.3.3), the instrumental, aesthetic and escapist dispositions amongst participating students (see Section 5.4.4), as well as different forms of agency expressed by these students as they participated in classroom activities (see Chapter 7), the incorporation of the CHAT perspective has left a greater deal of room within the analysis to consider some of the more nuanced aspects of interpersonal processes which might have been underestimated should the research have adopted an SDT position. By attending to the wider set of relationships, histories and expectations surrounding teaching and learning at the Ashwick, this research has highlighted that teachers and students may hold both positive and negative feelings towards their situations which pull them in different directions. Indeed, the findings from teacher interviews reported in this thesis have shown that the shifting equilibrium between achieving classroom control, ensuring student welfare, developing social skills, providing vocational training and maintaining academic standards was creating significant internal conflicts for staff at the Ashwick.

Moreover, the observational research presented in this thesis suggests that any simple dichotomy between the 'good' and 'bad' when it comes to supporting students basic psychological needs is unlikely to capture nuances between different teachers and students in everyday educational practice. Instead, the present research suggests that teacher actions or responses that fall in the middle ground, such as *containing* students to prevent an escalation in tensions, *diverting* their attention to alternative activities and offering *reciprocal concessions* (i.e., reducing the demands of the lesson to obtain student compliance), are worth further consideration in order to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between students and teachers in this educational context. Likewise, the findings presented in this thesis call into question the idea that the students attending PRUs can simply be deemed to belong to an oppositional sub-culture of students which consciously position themselves as resistant to schooling. Indeed, the interview data revealed that some

participating students had a simultaneous awareness of the necessity of classroom co-operation to gain vocational and social skills for future life and the constraints this sometimes placed upon the often more immediate desire to disregard the classroom rules in favour of other pursuits (e.g., socializing with peers). In addition, the observational data showed that in the case of the art lesson, the visiting artist faced little resistance from students while in the engineering lesson, student resistance was temporarily quelled through diversions rather than resolved to a state of closure.

In Section 2.3.6 it was argued that it is necessary to move away from the problematic question of overall impact of educational initiatives in order to consider the nuances of interpersonal processes. This was in order to avoid reducing the role of art in PRUs to a purely utilitarian function so that the *only* possible reason for the implementation of an art initiative would be to increase the students' educational engagement. However, as Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler and Schiller (1997, p.473) have pointed out:

researchers' reluctance to draw firm, generalizable conclusions from ambiguous data is often incompatible with the daily demands for decision-making of most educators and policymakers

Therefore, if the present research is to have any impact upon teaching practice at PRUs, then rather than simply regarding teachers as consumers of research findings, it would be more fruitful to consider them as mediators of these findings, so that the various questions arising from this research endeavour may act as useful prompts for reflecting upon their practice. Indeed, in section 4.3.3 it was pointed out that while staff at the Ashwick clearly felt inhibited by management's ongoing surveillance of their own practices, there were some indications that staff believed that there were some opportunities opening up for them to rationalise some of the less formalised aspects of their teaching practice. With this in mind, this chapter will conclude by outlining some questions which might act as a useful guide for practitioners working in a PRU context.

Figure 8.2

*Questions for Reflecting on Teaching Practice*

- What do I know about my students' competencies (academic, social, etc.)? Do I know how they perceive their abilities in various subject areas? How can I use this knowledge to develop their learning? If I need to know more, how might I find this out?
- What do I know about my students' relationships with their peers in school/outside school/with their teachers? How can I use this knowledge to develop their learning? If I need to know more, how might I find this out?
- How might I develop my students' autonomy so that they benefit from respite provision? How might I develop my students' autonomy so that they might feel more prepared to return to mainstream school? Do my proposals here (autonomy for respite, autonomy for reintegration) complement each other? Can they co-exist? Or do they conflict in any way?
- What are my students' dispositions towards classroom participation? How does this impact upon their learning and my teaching?
- How do I respond to resistance in the classroom? What are my reasons for this? Could I respond differently? Why/Why not? Could my actions be seen as supportive, controlling or perhaps somewhere in between? Having reflected more on this, what actions could I take next?

## References

- Ainley, M. (2006). Connecting with learning: Motivation, affect and cognition in interest processes. *Educational Psychology Review*, 18(4), 391-405.
- Ainley, M. & Ainley, J. (2011). Student engagement with science in early adolescence: The contribution of enjoyment to students' continuing interest in learning about science. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36(1), 4-12.
- Anderson, A. R., Christenson, S. L., Sinclair, M. F., & Lehr, C. A. (2004). Check & Connect: The importance of relationships for promoting engagement with school. *Journal of School Psychology*, 42(2), 95-113.
- Andrews, B.H. (2010) Student ownership: Learning in a student-centered art room. *Art Education*, 63(4), 40-46.
- Appleton, J. J., Christenson, S. L., Kim, D., & Reschly, A. L. (2006). Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the Student Engagement Instrument. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44 (5), 427-445.
- Arnheim, R. (1989). *Thoughts on art education*. Occasional paper 2. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Center for Education in the Arts.
- Armon, J., Uhrmacher, P.B. & Ortega, T. (2009). The significance of self-portraits: Making connections through monotype prints in 'letras y arte'. *Art Education*, 62(6), 12-18.
- Assor, A., Kaplan, H., & Roth, G. (2002). Choice is good, but relevance is excellent: Autonomy-enhancing and suppressing teacher behaviours predicting students' engagement in schoolwork. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 72(2), 261-278.
- Assor, A., Kaplan, H., Kanat-Maymon, Y., & Roth, G. (2005). Directly controlling teachers' behaviors as predictors of poor motivation and engagement in girls and boys: The role of anger and anxiety. *Learning and Instruction*, 15, 397-413.
- Astin, A.W. (1984) Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25(4), 297-308.
- Attwood, G., Croll, P. & Hamilton, J. (2004). Challenging students in further education: themes arising from a study of innovative FE provision for excluded and disaffected young people. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 28 (1), 107-119.
- Attwood, G., Croll, P. & Hamilton, J. (2003). Re-engaging with education. *Research Papers in Education*, 18 (1), 75-95.

- Avramidis, E., & Norwich, B. (2002). Teachers' Attitudes Towards Integration/Inclusion: A Review of the Literature. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 17(2), 129-147.
- Bakhurst, D. (2009). Reflections on activity theory. *Educational Review*, 61(2), 197-210.
- Ball, S. J. (1997). Policy sociology and critical social research: A personal review of recent education policy and policy research. *British Educational Research Journal*, 23(3), 257-274.
- Bandura, A. (1997). [\*Self-efficacy: the exercise of control\*](#). New York: W.H. Freeman.
- Banik, B.J. (1993). Applying triangulation in nursing research. *Applied Nursing Research*, 6(1), 47-52.
- Barnes, J. S., & Spray, C. M. (2013). Social Comparison in Physical Education: An Examination of the Relationship Between Two Frames of Reference and Engagement, Disaffection and Physical Self-Concept. *Psychology in the Schools*, 50(10), 1060-1072.
- Barrett, M.S., Everett, M.C. & Smigiel, H.M. (2012) Meaning, value and engagement in the arts: Findings from a participatory investigation of young Australian children's perceptions of the arts. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 44(2), 185–201.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529.
- Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scale. Retrieved from  
<http://selfdeterminationtheory.org/basic-psychological-needs-scale/>
- Baylin, E. (2010) Depth of field/depth of understanding: Finding the emotional connection. *Studies in Education*, 7(1), 86–100.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Beaver, R. (2003). *Educational Psychology Case Work*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Belenky, M.F. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. New York: Basic books.
- Benson, P. (1997). The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy. In P. Benson, & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 18-34). London: Longman.
- Berleant, A. (1993) *Art and engagement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

- Bernardo, A.B.I., Salanga, G.C. & Aguas, K.M. (2008). Filipino adolescent students' conceptions of learning goals. In O. Tan, D.M. McInerney, A.D. Liem & A.G. Tan (Eds.), *What the West can learn from the East: Asian perspectives on the psychology of learning and motivation* (pp.169–190). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Berridge, D., Brodie, I., Pitts, J., Porteous, D. and Tarling, R. (2001). *The Independent Effects of Permanent Exclusion from School on the Offending Careers of Young People*. (RDS Occasional Paper No. 71). Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.
- Black, A. E., & Deci, E. L. (2000). The effects of instructors' autonomy support and students' autonomous motivation on learning organic chemistry: A self-determination theory perspective. *Science education*, 84(6), 740-756.
- Blyth, E. & Milner, J. (1993). Exclusion from School: A First Step to Exclusion from Society? *Children & Society*, 7 (3), 255-269.
- Boaler, J. (1997). Setting, Social Class and Survival of the Quickest. *British Educational Research Journal*, 23 (5), 575-95.
- Boot, A. (2011). Searching For Studies. In J. Noyes, A. Booth & K. Hannes, A. Harden, J. Harris, S. Lewin, C. Lockwood (Eds.) *Supplementary guidance for inclusion of qualitative research in Cochrane systematic reviews of interventions*. The Cochrane collaboration qualitative and implementation methods. Retrieved from <http://cqim.cochrane.org/supplemental-handbook-guidance>
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bozack, A. R., Vega, R., McCaslin, M., & Good, T. L. (2008). Teacher support of student autonomy in comprehensive school reform classrooms. *Teachers College Record*, 110(11), 2389-2407.
- BPS (British Psychological Society). (2009). *Code of ethics and conduct*. Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- Brookes, M., Goodall, E., & Heady, L. (2007). *Misspent youth. The cost of truancy and exclusion*. New Philanthropy Capital. Retrieved from <http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/subject-areas/services-activity/education/skills/newphilanthropycapital/142297Misspent-youth-report.pdf>
- Brinda, W. (2008). Building literacy bridges for adolescents using holocaust literature and theatre. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 42(4), 31–44.



- Brisco, N. (2012). Creativity in a Complex Era. *SchoolArts*, 111(9), 28–29.
- Bruce, D.L. (2011). Framing the text: Using storyboards to engage students with reading. *English Journal*, 100(6), 78–85.
- Brader, A. & McGinty, S. (2005). Educational Disengagement: A Review of International, Australian and State Policy Responses. In A. Pandian, M.K. Kabilan & S. Kaur (Eds.), *Teachers' Practices and Supportive Cultures*. Serdang, Malaysia: Universiti Putra Malaysia Press.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge: University Press.
- Bryant, C. (2010). A 21st-Century Art Room: The remix of 'creativity' and technology. *Art Education*, 63(2), 43–48.
- Burnard, P. & White, J. (2008). Creativity and Performativity: Counterpoints in British and Australian Education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 34(5), 667–682.
- Byron, K., & Khazanchi, S. (2012). Rewards and creative performance: a meta-analytic test of theoretically derived hypotheses. *Psychological bulletin*, 138(4), 809-830.
- Capstick, J. (2005). Pupil and staff perceptions of rewards at a pupil referral unit. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 10(2), 95-117.
- Casteel, C. A. (1998). Teacher–student interactions and race in integrated classrooms. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 92(2), 115-120
- Charlton, T., Panting, C. & Willis, H. (2004). Targeting social exclusion: An evaluation of an alternative curriculum project. *British Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*. 9 (4), 124-139.
- Chin, C. (2011) Vibrate. . . resonate. . . quicken the educational experience into intensest life. *Art Education*, 64(3), 41–45.
- Chirkov, V. I., Ryan, R. M., & Willness, C. (2005). Cultural context and psychological needs in Canada and Brazil testing a self-determination approach to the internalization of cultural practices, identity, and well-being. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36(4), 423-443.
- Christopoulou, M. (2013). Exploring the socio-politics of the Greek debt crisis in a primary art classroom: A political cartooning project. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 32 (1), 44–54.

- Church, A.T. & Katigbak, M.S. (1992). The cultural context of academic motives: A comparison of American and Filipino college students. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 23(1), 40–58.
- Cialdini, R. B., Vincent, J. E., Lewis, S. K., Catalan, J., Wheeler, D., & Darby, B. L. (1975). Reciprocal concessions procedure for inducing compliance: The door-in-the-face technique. *Journal of personality and Social Psychology*, 31(2), 206-215.
- Clarke, S. N., Howley, I., Resnick, L., & Rosé, C. P. (2016). Student agency to participate in dialogic science discussions. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 10, 27-39.
- Connell, J. P. & Wellborn, J. G (1991). Competence, autonomy, and relatedness: A motivational analysis of self system processes. In M. R. Gunnar & L. Sroufe (Eds.), *Self processes and development*. The Minnesota symposia on child psychology. 23, 43–77. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cooper, H., Valentine, J. C., Nye, B., & Lindsay, J. J. (1999). Relationships between five after-school activities and academic achievement. *Journal of educational psychology*, 91(2), 369-378.
- Cordella, M. (2004). *The dynamic consultation: a discourse analytical study of doctor patient communication* (Vol. 128). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Craft, A. & Jeffrey, B. (2008) Creativity and performativity in teaching and learning: Tensions, dilemmas, constraints, accommodations and synthesis. *British Educational Research Journal*, 34 (5), 577–584.
- Cullen, M.A., Fletcher-Campbell, F., Bowen, E., Osgood, J. and Kelleher, S. (2000). Alternative Curriculum Programmes at Key Stage 4 (LGA Research Report 11). Slough: NFER.
- Cullen, K., & Monroe, J. (2010). Using positive relationships to engage the disengaged: An educational psychologist-initiated project involving professional sports input to a Pupil Referral Unit. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 27(1), 64-78.
- Cullingford, C. (1999). *The Causes of Exclusion: Home, School and the Development of Young Criminals*. London: Routledge.
- Cummings, K.L. (2012). Motivating urban youth: Honoring the experiences of adolescents. *Art Education*, 65(6), 18–24.
- Cremin, H., Mason, C., & Busher, H. (2011). Problematising pupil voice using visual methods: Findings from a study of engaged and disaffected pupils in an urban secondary school. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(4), 585-603.

- Christenson, S. L., & Reschly, A. L. (2010). Check & Connect: Enhancing school completion through student engagement. In B. Doll, W. Pfohl, & J. S. Yoon (Eds.), *Handbook of Youth Prevention Science* (pp. 327-348). London: Routledge.
- Cotzias E (2014). *Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England: 2012 to 2013*. London: Department for Education.
- Crath, R. (2017). 'Off the wall': reading community mural making as a contestable site of urban youth governance. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1-16.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal performance*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Rich, G. (1997). Musical improvisation: A systems approach. In R. Sawyer (Ed.), *Creativity in performance* (pp. 43-66). New York: Ablex.
- Damşa, C. I., Kirschner, P. A., Andriessen, J. E., Erkens, G., & Sins, P. H. (2010). Shared epistemic agency: An empirical study of an emergent construct. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 19(2), 143-186.
- Daniels, H., Cole, T., Sellman, E., Sutton, J., Visser, J., & Bedward, J. (2003). Study of young people permanently excluded from school (Research Report No. 405). London: Department for Education and Skills.
- Daniels, H., & Cole, T. (2002). The development of provision for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties: An activity theory analysis. *Oxford Review of Education*, 28(2-3), 311-329.
- Daniels, H. (2016). *Vygotsky and pedagogy*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Danko-McGhee, K. & Slutsky, R. (2007). Floating experiences: Empowering early childhood educators to encourage critical thinking in young children through the visual arts. *Art Education*, 60 (2), 13–16.
- Darts, D. (2011). Invisible culture: Taking art education to the streets. *Art Education*, 64(5), 49–53.
- De Castella, K., Byrne, D. & Covington, M. (2013). Unmotivated or motivated to fail? A cross-cultural study of achievement motivation, fear of failure, and student disengagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 861–880.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). The general causality orientations scale: Self-determination in personality. *Journal of research in personality*, 19(2), 109-134.
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (1991). A motivational approach to self: Integration in personality. In R. Dienstbier (Ed.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation: Perspectives on*

- motivation*. (pp.237–288). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press
- Deci, E. L., Nezlek, J., & Sheinman, L. (1981). Characteristics of the rewarder and intrinsic motivation of the rewardee. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40(1), 1–40.
- Deci, E. L., Schwartz, A. J., Sheinman, L., & Ryan, R. M. (1981). An instrument to assess adults' orientations toward control versus autonomy with children: Reflections on intrinsic motivation and perceived competence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 73(5), 642-650.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268.
- Dede, C. (2009). Immersive interfaces for engagement and learning. *Science*, 323(5910), 66–69.
- de Haan, M. (2001). Intersubjectivity in models of learning and teaching: Reflections from a study of teaching and learning in a Mexican Mazahua community. In Chaiklin, S. (Ed.), *The Theory and Practice of Cultural-Historical Psychology*. (pp.174-199). Aarhus, Denmark: University Press
- De Meyer, J., Tallir, I. B., Soenens, B., Vansteenkiste, M., Aelterman, N., Van den Berghe, L., Speleers, L. & Haerens, L. (2014). Does observed controlling teaching behavior relate to students' motivation in physical education? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 106(2), 541-554.
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS). (2011). *Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to Maximise the Participation of 16–24 Year Olds in Education, Training and Work*. London: HM Government.
- Department for Education. (DfE). (2016). Compare school and college performance. Retrieved from <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/>
- Dei, G. J. S., Mazzuca, J., & McIsaac, E. Zine., J.(1997). *Reconstructing "Dropout": A Critical Ethnography of the Dynamics of Black Students' Disengagement from Schools*. London: University of Toronto Press
- Department for Education (DfE). (2013). *Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2013*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2013#history>
- Department for Education (DfE). (2011). *Class size and education in England evidence report* (No. DFE-RR169). Retrieved from

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/183364/DFE-RR169.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183364/DFE-RR169.pdf)

Department for Education (DfE) (2014). *Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2012 to 2013*. Retrieved from

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/338094/SFR28\\_2014\\_text.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338094/SFR28_2014_text.pdf)

Department for Communities and Local Government (DfCLG). (2010). *English indices of deprivation 2010*. Retrieved from

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2010>

Department for Communities and Local Government (DfCLG). (2015). House Price Index. Retrieved from <http://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/hpi/>

Department for Children, Schools and Families (DfCSF). (2008). *Back on Track: A Strategy for Modernizing Alternative Provision for Young People*. Norwich: Crown.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2007). *Permanent and fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England, 2005/06*. London: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2005). *14–19 Education and Skills: White Paper*. London: The Stationery Office.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2004) *Removing Barriers to Achievement*. Nottingham: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003). *Every Child Matters*. Norwich: Crown Copyright.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2002). *Time for standards: reforming the school workforce*. London: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (2001). *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice*. Nottingham: DfES.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (1992). *School Governors: A Guide to the Law*. London: DES

Dewey, J. (1938) *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.

Diseth, Å., Danielsen, A. G., & Samdal, O. (2012). A path analysis of basic need support, self-efficacy, achievement goals, life satisfaction and academic achievement level among secondary school students. *Educational Psychology*, 32(3), 335-354.

Dotterer, A. M., McHale, S. M., & Crouter, A. C. (2007). Implications of out-of-school activities for school engagement in African American adolescents. *Journal of Youth and*

*Adolescence*, 36(4), 391-401.

- Dotterer, A. M., & Lowe, K. (2011). Classroom context, school engagement, and academic achievement in early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(12), 1649-1660.
- Douglas, H. (2007). *Containment and reciprocity: Integrating psychoanalytic theory and child development research for work with children*. London: Routledge
- Duffy, G., & Elwood, J. (2013). The perspectives of 'disengaged' students in the 14–19 phase on motivations and barriers to learning within the contexts of institutions and classrooms. *London Review of Education*, 11(2), 112-126.
- Duineveld, M., Beunen, R., Van Assche, K., During, R. & Van Ark, R. (2009) The relationship between description and prescription in transition research, in: K.J. Poppe, C. Termeer & M. Slingerland (Eds.) *Transitions towards sustainable agriculture and food chains in peri-urban areas*. (pp. 309–325). Wageningen, NL :Wageningen Academic Publishers.
- Durbin, B., Rutt, S., Saltini, F., Sharp, C., Teeman, D., & White, K. (2010). *The Impact of creative partnerships on school attainment and attendance*. National Foundation for Educational Research Retrieved from <http://rummelighed.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/nfer2010-impact-of-creative-partnerships-on-young-peoples-behavior-and-attainment234.pdf>
- Eastman, A. (2011). *No Excuses: A review of educational exclusion*. London: Centre for Social Justice.
- Eccles, J. S., Barber, B. L., Stone, M., & Hunt, J. (2003). Extracurricular activities and adolescent development. *Journal of Social Issues*, 59(4), 865-889.
- Eccles, J. S., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C. M., Reuman, D., Flanagan, C., & MacIver, D. (1993). Development during adolescence: The impact of stage-environment fit on young adolescents' experiences in schools and in families. *American Psychologist*, 48(2), 90-101.
- Edwards, A., & D'arcy, C. (2004). Relational agency and disposition in sociocultural accounts of learning to teach. *Educational review*, 56(2), 147-155.
- Edwards, A. (2005). Relational agency: Learning to be a resourceful practitioner. *International journal of educational research*, 43(3), 168-182.
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1991). Better Stories and Better Constructs: The Case for Rigor and Comparative. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(3), 620-627.

- Eisner, E. (1996) Evaluating the teaching of art, in: D. Boughton, E.W. Eisner & J. Lightvoet (Eds.) *Evaluating and assessing the visual arts in education: International perspectives* (pp. 75–94). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Elliott, J. (2001) *The performing school—managing, teaching and learning in a performance culture*. London: Routledge.
- Elliott, J.G. & Tudge, J. (2012) Multiple contexts, motivation and student engagement in the USA and Russia. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 27(2), 161–175.
- Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 133-156.
- Engeström, Y. (2008). Enriching activity theory without shortcuts. *Interacting with Computers*, 20(2), 256-259.
- Esmonde, I., Takeuchi, M. & Radakovic, N. (2011). Getting unstuck: Learning and histories of engagement in classrooms. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 18(3), 237–256.
- Fantuzzo, J., LeBoeuf, W., Rouse, H. & Chen, C. (2012). Academic achievement of African American boys: A city-wide, community-based investigation of risk and resilience. *Journal of School Psychology*, 50(5), 559–579.
- Farmer, T., Robinson, K., Elliott, S. J., & Eyles, J. (2006). Developing and implementing a triangulation protocol for qualitative health research. *Qualitative health research*, 16(3), 377-394.
- Feldman, D.H. (1983). Developmental psychology and art education. *Art Education*, 36(2), 19–21.
- Feldman, D.H. (1987). Developmental psychology and art education: Two fields at the crossroads. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 21(2), 243–259.
- Fielding, N. G. & Fielding, J. L. (1986). *Linking Data*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications
- Filak, V. F., & Sheldon, K. M. (2003). Student psychological need satisfaction and college teacher-course evaluations. *Educational psychology*, 23(3), 235-247.
- Finn, L. & Vandermaas-Peeler, M. (2013). Young children’s engagement and learning opportunities in a cooking activity with parents and older siblings. *Young Children*, 15(1). Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1016154.pdf>
- Finn, J.D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research*, 59(2), 117–142.
- Finn, J. D. (2006). *The adult lives of at-risk students: The roles of attainment and engagement in high school* (NCES 2006–328). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

- Finn, J.D. & Zimmer, K.S. (2012) Student engagement: What is it? Why does it matter? In S. Christenson, A.L. Reschly & C. Wylie (Eds.) *Handbook of research on student engagement*. (pp. 97–131). New York, Springer
- Finn, J. D., & Owings, J. (2006). *The Adult Lives of At-risk Students: The Roles of Attainment and Engagement in High School--statistical Analysis Report*. United States Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Educational Sciences.
- Fotiadi, E. (2012). Doing language: Narratives from an activist world in the Austrian art world of the 1990s: The art activism of WochenKlausur, Martin Krenn, Oliver Ressler and Maiz, *RIHA Journal*, 62. Retrieved from [https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1799974/133961\\_fotiadi\\_rihajournal\\_0062\\_1\\_.pdf](https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1799974/133961_fotiadi_rihajournal_0062_1_.pdf)
- Frankham, J. Edwards-Kerr, D., Humphrey, N. & Roberts, L. (2007). *School exclusions: Learning partnerships outside mainstream education*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Fredricks, J.A., Blumenfeld, P.C. & Paris, A.H. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59–10
- Fredricks, J., McColskey, W., Meli, J., Mordica, J., Montrosse, B. & Mooney, K. (2011). *Measuring Student Engagement in Upper Elementary through High School: A Description of 21 Instruments. Issues & Answers*. REL 2011-No. 098. Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast.
- Freeman, T.E. (2014). The reconciliation of art and psychology. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 33(2), 184–194.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. New York, Rowman & Littlefield.
- Furlong, M.J. & Christenson, S.L. (2008). Engaging students at school and with learning: A relevant construct for all students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5), 365–368.
- Furrer, C., & Skinner, E. (2003). Sense of relatedness as a factor in children's academic engagement and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 95(1), 148-162
- Gardner, H. (1992). Assessment in context: The alternative to standardized testing, in: B.R. Gifford & M.C. O'Connor (Eds). *Changing assessments*. (pp. 77–119). New York: Springer
- Gaskins, S. (2000). Children's daily activities in a Mayan village: A culturally grounded description. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 34(4), 375–389.



- Gersten, R., Vaughn, S., Deshler, D., & Schiller, E. (1997). What we know about using research findings: Implications for improving special education practice. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 30*(5), 466-476.
- Gillard, A., & Roark, M. F. (2013). Support for basic psychological needs in the context of HIV disclosure for older youth. *Children and Youth Services Review, 35*(1), 102-111.
- Gillen-O'Neel, C. & Fuligni, A. (2013) A longitudinal study of school belonging and academic motivation across high school. *Child Development, 84*(2), 678–692.
- Göncü, A. (1999). *Children's engagement in the world: Sociocultural perspectives*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Göncü, A., & Gauvain, M. (2012). Sociocultural approaches to educational psychology: Theory, research, and application. In K. R. Harris, S. Graham, T. Urdan (Eds). *APA Educational Psychology Handbook*. (Volume 1, pp. 123-152). Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association
- Grasha, A. F. (1996). *Teaching with style*. Pittsburgh PA: Alliance Publishers.
- Greenhalgh, T. & Heath, I. (2010). Measuring quality in the therapeutic relationship—Part 1: Objective approaches. *Quality and Safety in Health Care, 19*(6), 475–478.
- Gregory, A., Henry, D. B., Schoeny, M. E., & Metropolitan Area Child Study Research Group. (2007). School climate and implementation of a preventive intervention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 40*(3), 250-260.
- Haerens, L., Aelterman, N., Van den Berghe, L., De Meyer, J., Soenens, B., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2013). Observing physical education teachers' need-supportive interactions in classroom settings. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 35*(1), 3-17.
- Hallam, S., Rogers, L., Rhamie, J. Shaw, J., Rees, E., Haskins, H., Blackmore, J. & Hallam, J. (2007). Pupils' perceptions of an alternative curriculum: Skill Force. *Research Papers in Education, 22*:1, 43-63.
- Hampden-Thompson, G., Lubben, F., & Bennett, J. (2011). Post-16 physics and chemistry uptake: Combining large-scale secondary analysis with in-depth qualitative methods. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 34*(3), 289-307.
- Harris, B., Vincent, K., Thomson, P. & Toalster, R. (2006). Does Every Child Know They Matter? Pupils' Views of One Alternative to Exclusion. *Pastoral Care in Education. 24*(2), 28-38
- Hart, N. (2013). What helps children in a pupil referral unit (PRU)? An exploration into the potential protective factors of a PRU as identified by children and staff. *Emotional*

*and Behavioural Difficulties*, 18(2), 196-212.

- Hartnoll, R. (1991). Epidemiological Approaches to Drug Misuse in Britain. *Journal of Addictive Diseases*, 11 (1): 33-45.
- Haskins, C. (2012). Order, organization, and beauty in the classroom: A prerequisite, not an option. *Montessori Life*, 24(2), 34–39.
- Hayden, M. J. (2011) Standardized quantitative learning assessments and high stakes testing: Throwing learning down the assessment drain. *Philosophy of Education Yearbook*, 177–185.
- Hayton, A. (Ed.) (1999). *Tackling Disaffection and Social Exclusion: Education Perspectives and Policies*. London: Kogan Page.
- Heise, D. & MacGillivray, L. (2011). Implementing an art program for children in a homeless shelter. *Studies in Art Education*, 52(4), 323–336.
- Herr, K., & Brown, T. L. (2010). Masculinities and the Schooling of Middle-School Boys. In S. Tozer, B. P. Gallegos, A. M. Henry, M. B. Greiner, & P. G. Price (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on the Sociocultural Foundations of Education* (pp. 583–592). New York: Routledge.
- Hidi, S., Renninger, K.A. & Krapp, A. (2004) Interest, a motivational variable that combines affective and cognitive functioning. In D.Y. Dai & R.J. Sternberg (Eds.), *Motivation, emotion, and cognition: Integrative perspectives on intellectual functioning and development* (pp. 89–115). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hiett, S., & Kushner, J. (2013). Postcode criminals. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 32(3), 275-287.
- Hilton, Z. (2006). Disaffection and school exclusion: why are inclusion policies still not working in Scotland? *Research Papers in Education*, 21(3), 295-314
- Hirschman, E. C. (1983). On the acquisition of aesthetic, escapist, and agentic experiences. *Empirical studies of the arts*, 1(2), 157-172.
- Hodge, K., Lonsdale, C., & Jackson, S. A. (2009). Athlete engagement in elite sport: An exploratory investigation of antecedents and consequences. *The Sport Psychologist*, 23(2), 186-202.
- Hollifield, C. R., & Conger, K. J. (2015). The role of siblings and psychological needs in predicting life satisfaction during emerging adulthood. *Emerging Adulthood*, 3(3), 143-153.
- Holloway, D., & Chambers, J. (2016). Turning On the Turned Off. In Eds. A. Montgomery,

- Anthony & I. Kehoe *Reimagining the Purpose of Schools and Educational Organisations* (pp. 127-143). Springer International Publishing.
- Howarth, C. (2004). Re-presentation and resistance in the context of school exclusion: reasons to be critical. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 14(5), 356-377.
- Holzman, L. (2006). What kind of theory is activity theory? *Theory & Psychology*, 16(1), 5-11.
- Hubbs, D.L. & Brand, C. F. (2005). The Paper Mirror: Understanding Reflective Journaling. *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 28 (1), 60-71.
- Irvin, M.J. (2012) Role of student engagement in the resilience of African American adolescents from low-income rural communities, *Psychology in the Schools*, 49(2), 176–193.
- Jang, H., Reeve, J., & Deci, E. L. (2010). Engaging students in learning activities: It is not autonomy support or structure but autonomy support and structure. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 588-600.
- Jang, H., Reeve, J., Ryan, R. M., & Kim, A. (2009). Can self-determination theory explain what underlies the productive, satisfying learning experiences of collectivistically oriented Korean students? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101(3), 644-661.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.
- Johnston, M. M., & Finney, S. J. (2010). Measuring basic needs satisfaction: Evaluating previous research and conducting new psychometric evaluations of the Basic Needs Satisfaction in General Scale. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 35(4), 280-296.
- Jonassen, D. H., & Rohrer-Murphy, L. (1999). Activity theory as a framework for designing constructivist learning environments. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 47(1), 61-79.
- Kahu, E. R. (2013). Framing student engagement in higher education. *Studies in higher education*, 38(5), 758-773.
- Kegan, R. (1982). *The Evolving Self*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Kelle, U. (2001). Sociological Explanations Between Micro and Macro and the Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 2(1)  
Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm>

- Kelly, B. (2012). Implementation science for psychology in education. In B. Kelly & D.F. Perkins (Eds.) *Handbook of Implementation Science for Psychology in Education 1* (pp. 3–12). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2007). Research in Educational Psychology: The Bricolage and Educational Psychological Research Methods—Part 2. In J. L. Kincheloe & R. A. (Eds.) (2007). *The Praeger Handbook of Education and Psychology* (Vol. 1). (pp. 950-959). Westport, CA: Praeger
- Kinder, K., Harland, J., Wilkin, A. and Wakefield, A. (1995). *Three to Remember: Strategies for Disaffected Pupils*. Slough: NFER.
- Kind, S., Irwin, R.L., Grauer, K. & De Cosson, A. (2005). Medicine wheel imag(in)ings: Exploring holistic curriculum perspectives. *Art Education*, 58(5), 33–38.
- King, R.B., McInerney, D.M. & Watkins, D.A. (2012). Studying for the sake of others: The role of social goals on academic engagement. *Educational Psychology*, 32(6), 749–776.
- Kozbelt, A. & Seeley, W.P. (2007). Integrating art historical, psychological, and neuroscientific explanations of artists' advantages in drawing and perception. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 1(2), 80–90.
- Kothe, E.L. (2012). Beyond Art Waitressing: Meaningful Engagement in Interactive Art Galleries. *Art Education*, 65(4), 19–24.
- Kramer, M. (2013) Teachers' agency in School Development. University of Helsinki: Center for Research on Activity, Development and Learning. Retrieved from [http://files.adulteducation.at/bifodok/ResearchPlan\\_MartinKramer%202013\\_02\\_final.pdf](http://files.adulteducation.at/bifodok/ResearchPlan_MartinKramer%202013_02_final.pdf)
- Kumar, R. & Maehr, M.L. (2007) Cultural interpretations of achievement motivation. In F. Salili & R. Hoosain (Eds.) *Culture, motivation, and learning: A multicultural perspective* (pp. 43–66). Charlotte, NC: IAP.
- Kumpulainen, K., Lipponen, L., Hilppö, J., & Mikkola, A. (2014). Building on the positive in children's lives: a co-participatory study on the social construction of children's sense of agency. *Early Child Development and Care*, 184(2), 211-229.
- Laboratory for Comparative Human Cognition (2010). *Cultural–Historical Activity Theory*. University of California, San Diego: Elsevier. Retrieved from <http://lchc.ucsd.edu/Pubs/lchc.encyc.pdf>
- Ladd, G.W. & Dinella, L.M. (2009). Continuity and change in early school engagement: Predictive of children's achievement trajectories from first to eighth grade? *Journal*

of *Educational Psychology*, 101(1), 190–206.

- Lam, S., Jimerson, S., Kikas, E., Cefai, C., Veiga, F.H., Nelson, B. & Duck, R. (2012). Do girls and boys perceive themselves as equally engaged in school? The results of an international study from 12 countries. *Journal of School Psychology*, 50(1), 77–94.
- Landis, J. R., & Koch, G. G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, 33(1), 159-174.
- Langemeyer, I. (2006). Contradictions in expansive learning: Towards a critical analysis of self-dependent forms of learning in relation to contemporary socio-technological change. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(1) Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ines\\_Langemeyer/publication/277070495\\_Contradictions\\_in\\_Expansive\\_Learning\\_Towards\\_a\\_Critical\\_Analysis\\_of\\_Self-dependent\\_Forms\\_of\\_Learning\\_in\\_Relation\\_to\\_Contemporary\\_Socio-technological\\_Change/links/56e2df4408ae539fbfc06a70.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ines_Langemeyer/publication/277070495_Contradictions_in_Expansive_Learning_Towards_a_Critical_Analysis_of_Self-dependent_Forms_of_Learning_in_Relation_to_Contemporary_Socio-technological_Change/links/56e2df4408ae539fbfc06a70.pdf)
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lashari, T. A., Alias, M., Kesot, M. J., & Akasah, Z. A. (2012). The Effect of Integrated Affective Cognitive Learning Approach on Classroom Behavioral Engagement of Engineering Students. *ASEAN Journal of Engineering*. 1(1) 1-24.
- Lee, W. & Reeve, J. (2012). Teachers' estimates of their students' motivation and engagement: Being in synch with students. *Educational Psychology*, 32(6), 727–747.
- Lee, W.O. (1996). The cultural context for Chinese learners: Conceptions of learning in the Confucian tradition. In D.A. Watkins & J.B. Biggs (Eds.) *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological, and contextual perspectives* (pp. 25–41). Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Comparative Education Research Centre.
- Lehtonen, A. (2015). Evaluating students' agency and development of ownership in a collaborative playmaking project. *The European Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences*. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Anna\\_Lehtonen/publication/281323842\\_Evaluating\\_students'\\_agency\\_and\\_development\\_of\\_ownership\\_in\\_a\\_collaborative\\_claymaking\\_project/links/568d574008ae539fbfc06a70.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Anna_Lehtonen/publication/281323842_Evaluating_students'_agency_and_development_of_ownership_in_a_collaborative_claymaking_project/links/568d574008ae539fbfc06a70.pdf)
- Lemons, G. (2011). Diverse perspectives of creativity testing controversial issues when used for inclusion into gifted programs. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 34(5), 742-772.

- Levine, R.S. (2009). A closer look: Student engagement in artmaking. *Art Education*, 62(4), 13–17.
- Levinson, M. (2016). 'I don't need pink hair here': Should we be seeking to'reintegrate'youngsters without challenging mainstream school cultures? *International Journal on School Disaffection*, 12(1), 23-43.
- Liem, G. A. D., & Martin, A. J. (2012). The Motivation and Engagement Scale: Theoretical framework, psychometric properties, and applied yields. *Australian Psychologist*, 47(1), 3-13.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, N. K. (2003). *Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief*. Walnut Creek, C.A.: Rowman Altamira.
- Lindqvist G. (1995). *The aesthetics of play: A didactic study of play and culture in preschools*. Göteborg:Coronet Books.
- Lloyd, G., Stead J. & Kendrick, A. (2003). Joined-up approaches to prevent school exclusion. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*. 8(1), 77-92
- Mac an Ghaill, M. (1988). *Young, Gifted and Black: Student Teacher Relations in the Schooling of Black Youth*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Mack, D. E., Gunnell, K. E., Wilson, P. M., & Wierst, C. (2016). Well-Being in Group-Based Exercise Classes: Do Psychological Need Fulfillment and Interpersonal Supports Matter? *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 1-14.
- Maddock, M., Drummond, M. J., Koralek, B. & Nathan, I. (2007). Doing School Differently: Creative Practitioners at Work. *Education 3-13*, 35(1), 47–58.
- Mahoney, J. L., Cairns, B. D., & Farmer, T. W. (2003). Promoting interpersonal competence and educational success through extracurricular activity participation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(2), 409-418.
- Maguire, M., Ball, S. J., & Braun, A. (2013). What ever happened to...? 'Personalised learning' as a case of policy dissipation. *Journal of Education Policy*, 28(3), 322-338.
- Malin, H. (2012). Creating a children's art world: Negotiating participation, identity, and meaning in the elementary school art room. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 13(6). Retrieved from <http://www.ijea.org/v13n6/>.
- Martin, A.J. (2007). Examining a multidimensional model of student motivation and engagement using a construct validation approach. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77(2), 413– 440.
- Martin, A.J. (2012). The role of personal best (PB) goals in the achievement and behavioural engagement of students with ADHD and students without ADHD. *Contemporary*

*Educational Psychology*, 37(2), 91–105.

- Martin, A. J., Mansour, M., Anderson, M., Gibson, R., Liem, G. A., & Sudmalis, D. (2013). The role of arts participation in students' academic and nonacademic outcomes: A longitudinal study of school, home, and community factors. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 709-727
- Marziyeh, A., Ejei, J., Hejazi, E., & Tabatabaee, S. M. G. (2014). Relationship between dimensions of perceived teaching style, autonomous motivation and creativity: A model of creativity based on self-determination theory. *Journal of Psychology*, 17, 350–364.
- Massey, A., & Groves, J. (2011). *Best Behaviour: School discipline, intervention and exclusion*. London: Policy Exchange.
- McFarland, D. A. (2004). Resistance as a Social Drama: A Study of Change-Oriented Encounters 1. *American Journal of Sociology*, 109(6), 1249-1318.
- McLellan, R., Galton, M., Steward, S. and Page, C. (2012). *The impact of creative initiatives on wellbeing: a literature review*. Newcastle: CCE
- McMahon, B. & Portelli, J.P. (2004). Engagement for what? Beyond popular discourses of student engagement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 3(1), 59–76.
- McRobbie, A. (1978). Working class girls and the culture of femininity. In Women's Studies Group (Ed.), *Women take issue: Aspects of women's subordination* (pp. 96–108). London: Hutchinson.
- Meo, A., & Parker, A. (2004). Teachers, teaching and educational exclusion: Pupil Referral Units and Pedagogic practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 8(1), 103–120.
- Merrett, F., & Wheldall, K. (1986). Observing pupils and teachers in classrooms (OPTIC): A behavioural observation schedule for use in schools. *Educational Psychology*, 6(1), 57-70.
- Michael, S., & Frederickson, N. (2013). Improving pupil referral unit outcomes: Pupil Perspectives. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 18(4), 407-422.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Mitchell, R., Whitin, P. & Whitin, D. (2012). Interdisciplinary invitations: Exploring Gee's bend quilts. *Art Education*, 65(1), 25–32.
- Mitchell, J. C. (1984). Typicality and the Case Study. In R.F. Ellen (Ed.), *Ethnographic Research:*

*A Guide to General Conduct*. New York: Academic Press. 238-241.

- Moreira, P.A., Dias, P., Vaz, F.M. & Vaz, J.M. (2013). Predictors of academic performance and school engagement—Integrating persistence, motivation and study skills perspectives using person-centered and variable-centered approaches, *Learning and Individual Differences*, 24(2), 117–125.
- Motti-Stefanidi, F. & Masten, A.S. (2013). School success and school engagement of immigrant children and adolescents: A risk and resilience developmental perspective. *European Psychologist*, 18(2), 126–135.
- Mouratidis, A., Vansteenkiste, M., Lens, W., Michou, A. & Soenens, B. (2013). Within-person configurations and temporal relations of personal and perceived parent-promoted aspirations to school correlates among adolescents. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 895–910.
- Munn, P. & Lloyd, G. (2005). Exclusion and Excluded Pupils. *British Educational Research Journal*. 31(2), 205-221.
- Murray, D. (2006). *Autonomous learning behaviours: a fulcrum for course design, implementation and evaluation with larger classes*. Retrieved from [http://www.kansai-u.ac.jp/fl/publication/pdf\\_forum/7/07\\_murray\\_77.pdf](http://www.kansai-u.ac.jp/fl/publication/pdf_forum/7/07_murray_77.pdf)
- Nagawa, M. (2012) Beyond the Gallery: Interactions between Audiences, Artists, and Their Art through the Kampala Art Tour 2007–2010. *Art Education*, 65(2), 16–19.
- Nash, R. (2002). Numbers and Narratives: Further Reflections in the Sociology of Education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 23(3), 397-412.
- Najafi, S. (2013). Humanistic Education: Concerns, Implications and Applications. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(1), 45-51.
- Ng-He, C. (2010). Reflection on Engaging Student-Teaching-Artists. *Teaching Artist Journal*, 8(2), 96–103.
- Nie, Y., & Lau, S. (2009). Complementary roles of care and behavioral control in classroom management: The Self-Determination Theory perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 34(3), 185-194.
- Nielsen, H. K. (2003). Cultural Policy and Evaluation of Quality. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 9(3): 237-245.
- Niemiec, C. P., & Ryan, R. M. (2009). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness in the classroom: Applying self-determination theory to educational practice. *Theory and research in Education*, 7(2), 133-144.



- Nissani, M. (1997). Ten cheers for interdisciplinarity: The case for interdisciplinary knowledge and research. *The Social Science Journal*, 34(2), 201–216.
- O'Brien, A. (2004). Teacher, mentor or role model? – the role of the artist in community arts work with marginalised young people. *Change: Transformations in Education*, 7(2) 74–88.
- Ofsted (2011). Alternative Provision: Education Outside School. Retrieved from [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100233](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100233)
- Ofsted (1995). Pupil Referral Units: The First Twelve Inspections. London: Stationary Office.
- Oga-Baldwin, W. L. Q., & Nakata, Y. (2015). Structure also supports autonomy: Measuring and defining autonomy-supportive teaching in Japanese elementary foreign language classes. *Japanese Psychological Research*, 57(3), 167-179.
- Oginsky, T. (2003). Supporting the Development of Intrinsic Motivation in the Middle School Classroom. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED482246.pdf>
- O'Keefe, D. J. (1994). *Truancy in English secondary schools*. London: HMSO.
- Ou, S. R., Mersky, J. P., Reynolds, A. J., & Kohler, K. M. (2007). Alterable Predictors of Educational Attainment, Income, and Crime: Findings from an Inner-City Cohort. *Social Service Review*, 81(1), 85-128.
- Parsons, C. (2005). School Exclusion: The Will to Punish. *British Journal of Educational Studies*. 53, 187-211
- Parsons, C., Godfrey, R., Howlett, K., Hayden, C., & Martin, T. (2001). Excluding Primary School Children—The Outcomes Six years On. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 19(4), 4-15.
- Pianta, R. C., Karen, M., Paro, L., & Hamre, B. K. (2008). *Classroom assessment scoring system (CLASS) manual*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company.
- Pillay, J., Dunbar-Krige, H., & Mostert, J. (2013). Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 18(3), 310-326.
- Pirrie, A., Macleod, G., Cullen, M. A., & McCluskey, G. (2011). What happens to pupils permanently excluded from special schools and pupil referral units in England? *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(3), 519-538.
- Plenty, S. & Heubeck, B.G. (2013). A multidimensional analysis of changes in mathematics motivation and engagement during high school. *Educational Psychology*, 33(1), 14–30.
- Pomeroy, E. (1999). The Teacher-Student Relationship in Secondary School: Insights from

- Excluded Students. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 20(4), 465-482.
- Powis, B., Griffiths, P., Gossop, M., Lloyd, C., & Strang, J. (1998). Drug use and offending behaviour among young people excluded from school. *Drugs: education, prevention and policy*, 5(3), 245-256.
- Putwain, D. W., Nicholson, L. J., & Edwards, J. L. (2016). Hard to reach and hard to teach: supporting the self-regulation of learning in an alternative provision secondary school. *Educational Studies*, 42(1), 1-18.
- Quested, E., & Duda, J. L. (2010). Exploring the social-environmental determinants of well and ill-being in dancers: A test of basic needs theory. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 32(1), 39-60.
- Rainio, A.P. (2008). From resistance to involvement: Examining agency and control in a playworld activity. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 15(2), 115–140.
- Rainio, A. P., & Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2013). From ambivalence to agency: Becoming an author, an actor and a hero in a drama workshop. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 2(2), 111-125.
- Rajala, A., Hilppö, J., Lipponen, L., & Kumpulainen, K. (2013). Expanding the Chronotopes of Schooling for Promotion of Students' Agency. In O. Erstad & J. Sefton-Green (Eds.), *Identity, Community, and Learning Lives in the Digital Age* (pp. 107–25). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raufelder, D., Kittler, F., Braun, S. R., Lätsch, A., Wilkinson, R. P., & Hoferichter, F. (2014). The interplay of perceived stress, self-determination and school engagement in adolescence. *School Psychology International*, 35 (4) 405-420.
- Reeve, J., Ryan, R., Deci, E.L. & Jang, H. (2007) Understanding and promoting autonomous self- regulation: A self-determination theory perspective. In D. Schunk & B. Zimmerman (Eds.), *Motivation and self-regulated learning: Theory, research, and application* (pp.223–244). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. In Handbook of research on student engagement In Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., & Wylie, C. (Eds.). (2012). *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement*. (pp. 149-172). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Reeve, J., & Tseng, C. M. (2011). Agency as a fourth aspect of students' engagement during learning activities. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36(4), 257-267.
- Reeve, J., & Halusic, M. (2009). How K-12 teachers can put self-determination theory

- principles into practice. *School Field*, 7(2), 145-154.
- Reeve, J., & Jang, H. (2006). What teachers say and do to support students' autonomy during a learning activity. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(1), 209-218.
- Reeve, J. (2006). Teachers as facilitators: What autonomy-supportive teachers do and why their students benefit. *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(3), 225-236.
- Reeve, J. (2005). Extrinsic rewards and inner motivation. In Weinstein, C, & Good, T. (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management* (pp. 645-664). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Reeve, J. (2013). How students create motivationally supportive learning environments for themselves: The concept of agentic engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(3), 579-585
- Reeve, J., & Lee, W. (2014). Students' classroom engagement produces longitudinal changes in classroom motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 106(2), 527-540.
- Reis, H. T., Sheldon, K. M., Gable, S. L., Roscoe, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Daily well-being: The role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(4), 419-435.
- Reschly, A. L., & Christenson, S. L. (2012). Jingle, jangle, and conceptual haziness: Evolution and future directions of the engagement construct. In S. Christenson, A.L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement*. (pp. 3-19). New York, NY:Springer.
- Reyes, M.R., Brackett, M.A., Rivers, S.E., White, M. & Salovey, P. (2012). Classroom emotional climate, student engagement, and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(3), 700-712.
- Robson, C., & McCartan, K. (2016). *Real world research*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rose, M. (2012). Object lesson: Using family heirlooms to engage students in art history. *Art Education*, 65 (4), 47-52.
- Ross, N. (2014). *School Workforce in England: November, 2013*. London: Department for Education
- Ruich, L.J. (2012). Variety in play: Exploring photographs by Helen Levitt. *Art Education*, 65(4), 25-32.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic

- motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.
- Ryan, R. M., & Grolnick, W. S. (1986). Origins and pawns in the classroom: Self-report and projective assessments of individual differences in children's perceptions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50(3), 550-558
- Ryan, R. M., & Niemiec, C. P. (2009). Self-determination theory in schools of education Can an empirically supported framework also be critical and liberating? *Theory and Research in Education*, 7(2), 263-272.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). The darker and brighter sides of human existence: Basic psychological needs as a unifying concept. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 319-338.
- Salili, F. (1996). Accepting personal responsibility for learning, in: D.A. Watkins & J.B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological, and contextual perspectives*. (pp. 85–105). Hong Kong:University of Hong Kong Comparative Education Research Centre.
- Salomon, G. (1995). Reflections on the field of educational psychology by the outgoing journal editor, *Educational Psychologist*, 30(3), 105–108.
- Scholes, L. & Nagel, M.C. (2012). Engaging the creative arts to meet the needs of twenty-first-century boys. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(10), 969–984.
- Schleef, E. (2008). Gender and academic discourse: Global restrictions and local possibilities. *Language in Society*, 37(04), 515-538.
- Seddon, T. (1997). Education: Deprofessionalised? Or reregulated, reorganised and reauthorized. *Australian Journal of Education*, 41(3), 228-246.
- Seidel, T., & Prenzel, M. (2006). Stability of teaching patterns in physics instruction: Findings from a video study. *Learning and Instruction*, 16(3), 228-240.
- Sellman, E., Bedward, J. Cole, T. & Daniels, H. (2002). A Sociocultural Approach to Exclusion. *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(6) 889-900.
- Sellman, E. (2015). Safe spaces, support, social capital: a critical analysis of artists working with vulnerable young people in educational contexts. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 34(1), 60-72.
- Sellman, E. (2012). *Artists Working with Looked-After Children – An Evaluation Report for The Mighty Creatives*. Nottingham: University of Nottingham
- Shahar, G., Henrich, C. C., Blatt, S. J., Ryan, R., & Little, T. D. (2003). Interpersonal relatedness, self-definition, and their motivational orientation during adolescence: A theoretical

- and empirical integration. *Developmental psychology*, 39(3), 470-483.
- Shaffer, S. (2011). Opening the doors: Engaging young children in the art museum. *Art Education*, 64(6), 41–46.
- Shah, S. (2009). Muslim learners in English schools: A challenge for school leaders. *Oxford Review of Education*, 35(4), 523-540.
- She, H. C. (1999). Students' knowledge construction in small groups in the seventh grade biology laboratory: Verbal communication and physical engagement. *International Journal of Science Education*, 21(10), 1051-1066.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Filak, V. (2008). Manipulating autonomy, competence, and relatedness support in a game-learning context: New evidence that all three needs matter. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 47(2), 267-283.
- Sheldon, K. M., & Niemiec, C. P. (2006). It's not just the amount that counts: balanced need satisfaction also affects well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(2), 331-341.
- Shen, B., Li, W., Sun, H., & Rukavina, P. B. (2010). The influence of inadequate teacher-to student social support on amotivation of physical education students. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 29(4), 417-432.
- Shernoff, D.J., Csikszentmihalyi, M., Shneider, B. & Shernoff, E.S. (2003). Student engagement in high school classrooms from the perspective of flow theory, *School Psychology Quarterly*, 18(2), 158–176.
- Shumow, L., Schmidt, J. A., & Zaleski, D. J. (2013). Multiple perspectives on student learning, engagement, and motivation in high school biology labs. *The High School Journal*, 96(3), 232-252.
- Shusterman, R. (1992). *Pragmatist aesthetics: Living beauty, rethinking art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sickler-Voigt, D.C. (2011). Pablo Cano—'The Blue Ribbon': The art of appropriation. *Art Education*, 64(4), 25–32.
- Sinatra, G. M., Heddy, B. C., & Lombardi, D. (2015). The challenges of defining and measuring student engagement in science. *Educational Psychologist*, 50(1), 1-13.
- Skinner, E., Furrer, C., Marchand, G., & Kindermann, T. (2008). Engagement and disaffection in the classroom: Part of a larger motivational dynamic? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 100(4), 765-781.
- Smithrim, K., & Uptis, R. (2005). Learning through the arts: Lessons of engagement.

*Canadian Journal of Education*, 28 (1&2), 109-127.

- Smith, C.P. (2000). Content analysis and narrative analysis. In T. Reis & C. Judd (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology*. (pp. 313–337). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, L. (2005). Education. In Hopkins, B., Barr, R. G., Michel, G. F. and Rochat, P. (Eds.), *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Child Development*. (pp. 487-490). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, N., Tessier, D., Tzioumakis, Y., Fabra, P., Quested, E., Appleton, P., Papaioannou, A., Sarrazin, P., Balaguer, I. & Duda, J. (2016). The Relationship between Observed and Perceived Assessments of the Coach-created Motivational Environment and Links to Athlete Motivation. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 23, 51–63.
- Solomon, Y. & Rogers, C. (2001). Motivational Patterns in Disaffected School Students: Insights from Pupil Referral Unit Clients. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(3), 331-345.
- Standage, M., Duda, J. L., & Ntoumanis, N. (2003). A model of contextual motivation in physical education: Using constructs from self-determination and achievement goal theories to predict physical activity intentions. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(1), 97-110.
- Statham, J., & Chase, E. (2010). *Childhood Wellbeing: A brief overview*. Loughborough: Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre.
- Stephenson and Deasy (2005). *Third space: When learning matters*. Washington, DC: Arts Education Partnership.
- Stroet, K., Opdenakker, M. C., & Minnaert, A. (2015). Need supportive teaching in practice: a narrative analysis in schools with contrasting educational approaches. *Social Psychology of Education*, 18(3), 585-613.
- Sue, S. & Okazaki, S. (1990). Asian-American educational achievements: A phenomenon in search of an explanation. *American Psychologist*, 45(8), 913–920.
- Tate. (n.d.) Community Art. Retrieved July, 12, 2017 from <http://www.tate.org/art/art-terms/c/community-art>
- Taylor, C. (2012). *Improving Alternative Provision*. Department for Education: Crown Publishing.
- Taylor, G., Lekes, N., Gagnon, H., Kwan, L., & Koestner, R. (2012). Need satisfaction, work school interference and school dropout: An application of self-determination

- theory. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82(4), 622-646.
- Tessier, D., Sarrazin, P., & Ntoumanis, N. (2010). The effect of an intervention to improve newly qualified teachers' interpersonal style, students motivation and psychological need satisfaction in sport-based physical education. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 35(4), 242-253.
- Thomson, P. & Russell, L. (2009). Data, data everywhere – but not all the numbers that count? Mapping alternative provisions for students excluded from school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13:4, 423-438
- Thomson, P., & Russell, L. (2007). *Mapping the alternatives to permanent exclusion*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Thurmond, V. A. (2001). The point of triangulation. *Journal of nursing scholarship*, 33(3), 253-258.
- Torsheim, T., Wold, B., & Samdal, O. (2000). The teacher and classmate support scale: Factor structure, test-retest reliability and validity in samples of 13-and 15-year-old adolescents. *School Psychology International*, 21(2), 195-212.
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study Video. (TIMSS). (1999). Retrieved from <http://www.timssvideo.com/>
- Trowler, P. & Trowler, V. (2010). *Student engagement evidence summary*. Department of Educational Research: University of Lancaster.
- Turner, J. C., Meyer, D. K., & Schweinle, A. (2003). The importance of emotion in theories of motivation: Empirical, methodological, and theoretical considerations from a goal theory perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 39(4), 375-393.
- Turner-Bisset, R. (2007) Performativity by stealth: A critique of recent initiatives on creativity, *Education 3–13*, 35(2), 193–203.
- Turner, J. C., Meyer, D. K., & Schweinle, A. (2003). The importance of emotion in theories of motivation: Empirical, methodological, and theoretical considerations from a goal theory perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 39(4), 375-393.
- Urfalino, P. 2004. *L'invention de la politique culturelle. Deuxième édition* [The invention of cultural policy. 2nd ed.]. Paris: Hachette.
- Upadaya, K. & Salmela-Aro, K. (2013). Development of school engagement in association with academic success and well-being in varying social contexts: A review of empirical research. *European Psychologist*, 18(2), 136–147.
- Vandell, D. L., Shernoff, D. J., Pierce, K. M., Bolt, D. M., Dadisman, K., & Brown, B. B. (2005).

Activities, engagement, and emotion in after-school programs (and elsewhere). *New directions for youth development*, 105, 121-129.

- Vansteenkiste, M., Simons, J., Lens, W., Soenens, B., & Matos, L. (2005). Examining the motivational impact of intrinsic versus extrinsic goal framing and autonomy-supportive versus internally controlling communication style on early adolescents' academic achievement. *Child Development*, 76(2), 483-501.
- Vulliamy, G., & Webb, R. (2001). The social construction of school exclusion rates: implications for evaluation methodology. *Educational Studies*, 27(3), 357-370.
- Wallace, T. L., & Sung, H. C. (2016). Student Perceptions of Autonomy-Supportive Instructional Interactions in the Middle Grades. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 1-25.
- Wang, M. & Peck, S.C. (2013). Adolescent educational success and mental health vary across school engagement profiles. *Developmental Psychology*, 49(7), 1266–1276.
- Wang, M., Willett, J.B. & Eccles, J.S. (2011). The assessment of school engagement: Examining dimensionality and measurement invariance by gender and race/ethnicity. *Journal of School Psychology*, 49(4), 465–480.
- Warnock, M. (1978). *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People*. London: HMSO.
- Webster, C. A., Wellborn, B., Hunt, K., LaFleche, M., Cribbs, J., & Lineberger, B. (2013). MPOWER: An Observation System for Assessing Coach Autonomy Support in High School Varsity Boys' Soccer Practices. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 8(4), 741-754.
- Webster, L., & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method: An introduction to using critical event narrative analysis in research on learning and teaching*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Wetherell, M., & Potter, J. (1992). *Mapping the language of racism*. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Whalen, S. P. (1998). Flow and the engagement of talent: Implications for secondary schooling. *NASSP bulletin*, 82(595), 22-37.
- White, C., & Laczik, A. (2016). Engaging disaffected learners in Key Stage 4 through work related learning in England. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 68(1), 17-32.
- Wilkin, A., Gulliver, C. & Kinder, K. (2005). *Serious Play: An evaluation of arts activities in Pupil Referral Units and Learning Support Units*. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.



- Wilkins, C. (2011). Professionalism and the post-performative teacher: new teachers reflect on autonomy and accountability in the English school system. *Professional Development in Education*, 37(3), 389-409.
- Williams, G. C., & Deci, E. L. (1996). Internalization of biopsychosocial values by medical students: A test of self-determination theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(4), 767-779.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs*. Farnborough, UK: Saxon House.
- Wiersma, W. (2000). *Research Methods in Education: An Introduction*. (7th edition). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Wood, L. A., & Kroger, R. O. (2000). *Doing discourse analysis: Methods for studying action in talk and text*. London: Sage.
- Wosnitza, M., & Beltman, S. (2012). Learning and motivation in multiple contexts: the development of a heuristic framework. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 27(2), 177-193.
- Wu, J., Hughes, J.N. & Kwok, O. (2010). Teacher–student relationship quality type in elementary grades: Effects on trajectories for achievement and engagement. *Journal of School Psychology*, 48 (5), 357–387.
- Yamagata-Lynch, L. C. (2007). Confronting analytical dilemmas for understanding complex human interactions in design-based research from a cultural—historical activity theory (CHAT) framework. *The Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 16(4), 451-484.
- Yerkes, R.M. (1933). Concerning the anthropocentrism of psychology. *Psychological Review*, 40(2), 209–212.
- Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zarakovsky, G. M. (2014). The objective function of human adaptation: Developing the ideas of Vsevolod I. Medvedev. *Human Physiology*, 40(6), 589-596.
- Zilber, T.B., Tuval-Mashiach, R. & Lieblich, A. (2008). The embedded narrative navigating through multiple contexts. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 14(6), 1047–1069.
- Zyngier, D. (2008). (Re) conceptualising student engagement: Doing education not doing time. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(7), 1765–1776.

### **Personal Code of Ethics**

#### **Introduction**

Professional codes of conduct and guidelines for research practice have been developed in the social sciences in an attempt to ensure an effective implementation of some of the more abstract propositions in ethical theory. Whilst such formalised ethical codes of practice have achieved much by affording more rigorous forms protection to research participants, the mechanical application of codes and regulatory systems (which were originally devised for the conduct of bio-medical and quantitative research) to more open-ended and contextually-sensitive forms of qualitative research has not gone unchallenged. For example, it has been argued that such standardized codes may actually constrain the research process by blunting qualitative researchers' sensitivities to the method-specific issues that do arise thus failing to offer any real protection to research participants (see Murphy & Dingwall, 2001 p340 ).

Therefore, whilst the proposed research aims to observe what pupils and teachers do in "real-life" contexts in order to provide a richer and more detailed account of learning than would be otherwise attainable using any other research method; it is noted that the ethical issues surrounding this approach are considerably more complex than those which are less bound by the particular environments in which they take place. It is with these complexities in mind, as well as the historical limitations which are embedded within our current professional ethical guidelines; that I set out a more personal code of ethics in order to provide more detailed guidance on the conduct of research within the particular parameters of the current project. By drawing upon the relevant literature on the ethics of ethnographic research and my own values and research aims, I outline the potential ethical issues and researcher responses in the sections which follow.

#### **Issue: Recruitment of Participants**

As Flewitt (2005) points out, there are ethical concerns when accessing research participants through a gatekeeper since the researcher risks exploiting the relationship that gatekeeper and the people the researcher wishes to recruit for their study. In the context of the present research for example, parents of the pupils may feel a certain obligation to allow their child to participate in the research in order to maintain/build positive relations with the staff in the school, fearing that refusing to give their permission could damage their relationship with school staff or the services that their child receives. Similarly, children at the school may feel pressure to participate in the research in order to demonstrate co-operation with school staff, fearing that refusing to participate might have negative consequences in how staff perceive their behaviour. As regards school staff participating in the research project, as Patai (1991) has observed, researchers must be wary of burdening them with expectations of high levels of involvement, particularly in cases where this might exert further pressure and stress on busy staff who perform multiple roles within the school.

#### **Response: Protracted time-scale for recruiting participants**

For the current research, it was decided that staff working with individual pupils should make initial contact with parents of potential research participants in order to make clear to parents their rights to decline to participate, to reassure parents that there would be no negative outcomes if they chose not to have their child participate and to answer any questions that they might have. The researcher also reminded the participating pupils at several stages during the research (especially before beginning any data collection), that if they decided to participate they are always free to change their minds – for a few minutes, a whole session or for the rest of the project. Thus the process of negotiating consent to participate in the project began over a period of initial visits to the school setting and continued as the project progressed. A process of negotiation such as this gives time for parents and participants to reflect upon the information that they will be given about the research as well as affording them time to ask questions, express doubts and to resolve any differences in the researcher's and participants perceptions of potential harm arising from the study.

In relation to the participation of key staff, it is worth considering Hammersley and Atkinson's view that there should be a "comparison between what is given and what is received" and "the researcher should give something back, in the way of services or payment" (2007, p. 218). In other words, those who take on the burdens of research participation should share in the benefits of the research as well as the knowledge gained. Thus, in the context of the current project, it was deemed necessary to articulate to staff some of the specific ways this will be achieved. This included the acquisition of a departmental funding from Edge Hill University in order to secure additional art books and materials as well as financial support for gallery trips and visiting artists. In addition, it was agreed with school management that upon completion of the PhD research project, an event would be organised in order to communicate key research findings as well as to thank staff for their participation and efforts.

### **Issue: Informed Consent**

According to the Economic and Social Research Council's guidance (2012, p.2), research participants must be fully informed about the purpose of the research. This hallmark of research ethics is usually achieved by ensuring that potential participants fully understand the possible benefits and risks of the research so that they can decide in a conscious and deliberate way whether they want to take part. Most researchers think of informed consent as a written form which describes the purpose of the research, potential uses of the research data and explains potential risks that may arise. It usually includes legalistic language, explains that participants are free to withdraw at any time and is signed by the participant, the researcher, and possibly a witness. Whilst such forms are appropriate for biomedical and other research, when the risks faced by participants may be direct and substantial; in ethnographic research, such forms are a necessary but insufficient means of ensuring that each participant truly has a full understanding of the research process. For example, when reflecting upon her own experiences in ethnographic research, Fang (2010) explains that there may be misunderstandings caused by the participants' different understandings about research as well as misunderstandings arising from the multiple roles that researchers and participants play in the research setting.

In the present research project the researcher had multiple identities and roles within the participating school including: a temporary art teacher, a community artist, a psychologist, a colleague to teachers, a PhD researcher, a programme leader

accountable to the head teacher and a funding applicant. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) have noted that it is common for participants to forget the researcher's research mission when they come to know the latter as a person. Whilst my research role became more apparent when conducting interviews and structured classroom observations, it was also worth considering that the participants may have forgotten that unrecorded informal chats might also be taken as field-note data. Added to this dilemma, is the fact that there may also be situations where obtaining informed consent may not be feasible. For example, as public institutions, it is impossible to control for who might enter a classroom or a gallery space and the transactions that might occur as a result (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). Thus, it would be extremely difficult to get every person observed over the course of the art programme to sign a consent form. Furthermore, attempting to seek consent in these instances might create unwarranted suspicion about the researchers' motives. In such situations, qualitative researchers must take alternative steps to ensure the research is conducted in an ethical manner.

### **Response: Consent as an emergent/ongoing process**

Once initial consent was established and relevant forms were completed, ongoing consent was not simply assumed. Rather it was negotiated on an on-going basis by building in various opportunities for pupils to give feedback on their experience of participation as well as by remaining sensitive and responsive to any negative reactions participating pupils' might have to being observed and audio-recorded. In addition, staff and/or parents were encouraged to let me know immediately if they felt that the research project was having an adverse effect on any pupil's school experiences (Flewitt, 2005). Rather than disrupting the flow of activities and the course of informal conversations by reminding participants/members of the public, that the insights and information they give might be used as research data, field notes which were recorded on paper only and then reviewed and converted to a more suitable format for the final presentation of the results (i.e. by altering identifying characteristics such as characteristics like race, gender, name, place and appearance as well as omitting details on sensitive topics discussed or specific, private information about an individual's life circumstances). (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011).

### **Issue: Disclosure of sensitive information during in-depth interviews**

Whilst the pupils participating in the proposed research may value the promise of being able to express their views in confidence, without the presence of parents, siblings or others during in-depth interviews, the extent to which that promise can be guaranteed, however, is a function of both ethical duties and policy guidelines relating to the protection of young people from various forms of physical and sexual abuse (Cashmore, 2006). Indeed, as the Department for Education and Skill's (2006, pp26-27) guidance on these matters point out:

“Experience, and consultation with children, shows that they will talk about their concerns and problems to people they feel they can trust and they feel comfortable with. This will not necessarily be a teacher. It is therefore essential that all staff and volunteers in a school, FE college or other education establishment know how to respond sensitively to a child's concerns, who to approach for advice about them, and the importance of not guaranteeing complete confidentiality”

Thus, it is clear that in a situation where a young person discloses that they or others are at risk of significant harm, or where the researcher observes or receives evidence of incidents likely to cause serious harm to young research participants, the researcher has a legal duty to take steps to protect these individuals. Nevertheless, this raises serious questions regarding the extent to which young participants understand the conditions surrounding continuing consent and the other issues of privacy and confidentiality (Hurley & Underwood, 2002). Indeed, under circumstances of trust, such as those which govern the relationship between participant and researcher, the participant may feel betrayed if confidences are broken, even in situations where legitimate concerns have been raised about his/her wellbeing. It is useful to remember that the participant may have confided in the researcher assuming that the boundaries surrounding his/her privacy were, in fact, limitless. To proceed with interviews without informing participants that this is not the case, risks doing violence to participants' sense of trust.

### **Response: Interview Protocol**

Interestingly, some researchers, like Carroll-Lind, Chapman, Gregory, and Maxwell, (2006), have investigated the preferences of children who have disclosed abuse or other problems in the course of a research project. In response to a question on how they thought researchers should respond to particular risks (for example, child maltreatment, substance abuse or suicide); it was found that children preferred to make decisions and take action in the light of having access to information about the likely consequences of reporting to the relevant authorities. As a result, it is argued that standard discussion with all young people at the beginning of an interview should contain information about the limitations of the researcher's ability to maintain confidentiality. Thus, whilst the interview questions are not in any way designed to elicit sensitive information - they will be based upon the young person's attitudes to school, experiences of education and personal hobbies and interests - it is argued that the following protocol, as adapted from recommendations made by the Seattle Children's Hospital Research Foundation (2013), represents a more helpful means of beginning in-depth interviews:

"What you tell me here is between you and me. I will not tell your parents or others about what we have discussed without your permission.

"However, I want you to be aware that there are certain circumstances under which I will not be able to keep that promise. For example, if what you tell me suggests that you or somebody else is at risk of serious harm, I will need to share that information with the head teacher at the Ashwick Centre".

### **Issue: Representation of Participants in research documents**

The experience of being written about in itself may be a matter for ethical concern. As Murphy and Dingwall (2001) point out, research participants may be wounded not only by what is contained in a report, but also by what has been left out. Moreover, however careful researchers may be in their own writing, they cannot guarantee that it will not be used to produce offensive characterizations of participants or settings. Indeed, the widening dissemination of social science research increases the risk that such research will be taken up in ways over which the authors have minimal control or influence. Of further concern here, is that the finding that existing media representations of excluded pupils tend to be negative and often serve to stigmatize and lay blame upon the communities, social circles and families in which these students operate (Howarth, 2004). Thus, as Li (2008) argues, researchers conducting case studies of a more sensitive

nature should make a strong effort to fulfil their social responsibilities in protecting those vulnerable from further stigmatization and negative judgements. Beyond this, however successful observational researchers are in protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of those they study, participants and informants will most likely remain identifiable to themselves. This raises the possibility then, that even where publication will not lead to public humiliation; it may cause private (or community) shame.

#### **Response: Transparency in communication of data analysis**

For the purposes of the present research, it is argued that the principal ethical concern stems not from the fact the researcher takes control over the interpretative and research presentation processes. Rather, the key ethical consideration here stems from the more subtle fact that in taking such control the researcher is afforded the capacity to exploit his/her authorial position by imposing interpretations on the data that participants do not acknowledge, or even worse, serve to disempower and abuse them. From this perspective then, the ability to judge whether a piece of research is being conducted in an ethical manner is derived by affording the recipients of the research opportunities to consider, reflect and respond to the manner in which the participants thoughts, behaviours and activities are being represented in the research texts. Indeed, as Dingwall (1992) has pointed out, by separating out the data from the researcher's interpretation, authors open up the possibility that their interpretation may be challenged and even modified. Thus, by making the process of data analysis more transparent, the authority of the researcher's interpretations are attained through rigour and sophistication of analysis rather than simply gained from his/her scholarly status. To give an example of such practice, in cases where multiple meanings might be obtained from a participant's statement or behaviour, this plurality is explicitly acknowledged within the analysis together with a consideration of the relative worth of these different interpretations.

#### **Issue: Use of Visual Data**

Although the main corpus of data to be collected for the proposed case study is observational field notes, interview recordings and questionnaire responses; at times, visual images were used to capture the richness of the participants artistic output, to more adequately reflect the nature of the learning activities as well as to aid interviewees' recall during the interview process. However, visual methods in education research do not have an established history of ethical procedures and practices (Prosser, 2000). As Flewitt points out, although participants names may be changed in written accounts and erased from audio recordings, visual images make them easily recognisable which may render participants and staff vulnerable to criticism, anxiety or self-doubt. Even if participants give signed consent for visual images of themselves to be reproduced at the outset of the project, their attitude and attitudes may change over time.

#### **Response: Protection of participants' anonymity**

In order to protect the anonymity of participants, no photographs will be produced in which identifying details are available (this includes facial details and details of the school setting). Instead, verbal consent was sought for photographs to be taken of the artistic outcomes of the various projects. In order to capture the social dynamics and nature of the school setting (e.g. classroom layouts, seating patterns, equipment etc.)

images will be reproduced in diagrammatic form in the field notes. A transparent approach to the production of imagery will be adopted whereby images taken will be routinely shown to participants in order to relieve any concerns they might have about this process. It is envisaged that this approach will strike a more ethical balance between the wellbeing of the participants and the value of presenting the output of the art programme in visual forms to parties interested in hearing and reading about it in presentations and publications.

## Conclusion

The everyday social realities within a school are fluid and unpredictable because they are largely shaped by situated and often unforeseen circumstances produced by the people who come into contact with each other (O'Brien, 2006). Consequently, psychology researchers who engage in observational and practice-based research in such settings have no choice but to situationally solve many on-site ethical problems as they are encountered in the research process. Therefore, the type of study being proposed requires the researcher to keep a mindful awareness of ongoing relationships and activities and to make frequent adjustments accordingly (Li, 2008). In conducting observational research with young people who are typically regarded as vulnerable, it is necessary to be aware that social relationships between the researcher and the participants are somewhat fragile and subject to break downs. However, as Li (2008) points out, such disruptions can be repaired when researchers are psychologically prepared for unforeseen occurrences, have a capacity to adjust to difficult circumstances and display empathy and remain respectful when dealing with any sensitive issues that might emerge over the course of the project. Thus, it is important to note that there may be no easy, immediate or universal solutions for the inherent dilemmas that arise when conducting observational, field research. Thus, in studies of this nature, research ethics becomes a process and must go significantly beyond simply avoiding the contravention of standardized guidelines. Instead, an ongoing, mindful consideration of the well-being of the individual participants and school community being studied becomes a vital guiding principle.

## References

- Campesino, M. (2007). Homicide bereavement: Reflections on the therapeutic relationship in trauma research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 541-553.
- Carroll-Lind, J., Chapman, J. W., Gregory, J., & Maxwell, G. (2006). The key to the gatekeepers: Passive consent to and other ethical issues surrounding the rights of children to speak on issues that concern them. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30, 000-000.
- Cashmore, J. (2006). Ethical issues concerning consent in obtaining children's reports on their experience of violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect: The International Journal*, 30(9), 969-977.
- Cutcliffe, J. R., & Ramcharan, P. (2002). Leveling the playing field? Exploring the merits of the ethics-as-process approach for judging qualitative research proposals. *Qualitative*

*Health Research*, 12(7), 1000-1010.

Department for Education and Skills (2006). *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.

Economic and Social Research Council. (2012). *ESRC Framework for Research Ethics*. Retrieved on 27/0313 from: [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/\\_images/Framework-for-Research-Ethics\\_tcm8-4586.pdf](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Framework-for-Research-Ethics_tcm8-4586.pdf)

Eisner, E. W. (1997). The new frontier in qualitative research methodology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3(3), 259-273.

Dingwall, R. (1992). Don't mind him—he's from Barcelona": Qualitative Methods in Health Studies. In Daly, J. McDonald, I. Willis, E. (Eds.) *Researching health care: designs, dilemmas, disciplines*. London: Tavistock/Routledge, 161-75.

Fang, X. (2010). Doing Ethnographic Study in a Chinese High School: Ethical Dilemmas in the Field. Paper presented at Weaving the Threads of Educational Research: Postgraduate Research Conference, School of Education, University of Nottingham.

Flewitt, R. (2005). Conducting research with young children: Some ethical considerations. *Early Child Development and Care*, 175(6), 553-565.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. Third Edition. New York: Taylor & Francis.

Howarth, C. (2004). Re-presentation and Resistance in the Context of School Exclusion: Reasons to be Critical. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*. 14: 356–377.

Hurley, J. C., & Underwood, M. K. (2002). Children's understanding of their research rights before and after debriefing: Informed assent, confidentiality, and stopping participation. *Child development*, 73(1), 132-143.

Li, J. (2008). Ethical challenges in participant observation: A reflection on ethnographic fieldwork. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(1), 100-115.

Murphy, E., & Dingwall, R. (2001). The ethics of ethnography. In (Eds.) Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S, Lofland, J. & Lofland, L. *Handbook of ethnography*, 339-351. London: Sage

O'Brien, J. (2006). Building and breaching reality. In J. O'Brien (Ed.), *The production of reality: Essays and readings on social interaction* (pp. 334-352). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge.

Patai, D. (1991). 'US academics and Third World Women: Is ethical research possible?', in S. Gluck and D. Patai. (eds.) *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. New



York: Routledge. Pp. 137-153.

Prosser, J. 'The moral maze of image ethics' in Simons, H. & Usher, R. (2000) *Situated Ethics in Educational Research*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Seattle Children's Hospital Research Foundation (2013). Case Discussion: Confidentiality and Adolescents. Retrieved on 5th April 2013 from:  
<http://www.seattlechildrens.org/research/initiatives/bioethics/education/case-based-teaching-guides/confidentiality/case-discussion/>

## Appendix B

### Teacher interview schedule

Does this school run out of hours extra-curricular activities?

If yes, what are they?

If no, has this idea ever been considered? Would you be open to the idea? What might the barriers be for doing this?

Does this school run extra-curricular activities during school hours?

If yes, what are they?

If no, why do you think this is the case?

Has this idea ever been considered? Would you be open to the idea? What might the barriers/difficulties be for doing this? Do you have any experience of organising/helping out with extra-curricular activities? Can you tell me some more about this experience?

Do you feel extra-curricular activities have an impact on pupils?

(prompts – behaviours, feelings, attitudes towards school)

What kind of impact do you think they have?

(Follow-up with: how do you think this comes about?)

Are there any differences between the type impacts made by extra-curricular activities?

Have you ever run any art activities for the pupils? Can you tell me about an activity you have organised in the past?

Do you feel that this activity had any impact on the pupils?

(prompts – behaviours, feelings, attitudes towards school)

Did you consider the activity a success – why/why not?

In general what kind of impact do you think visual arts activities have on the pupils?

Are there any differences between the type impacts made by art activities and other extra-curricular activities? What do you think these differences are?

Do you think there is anything distinctive about what the visual arts can offer pupils?

## Basic transcription notation conventions

	(.3), (2.6)	Examples of timed pauses
	(.)	Just noticeable pause
	↑word, ↓word	Onset of noticeable pitch rise or fall (can be difficult to use reliably)
<b>A:</b> <b>B:</b>	word [word [word	Square brackets aligned across adjacent lines denote the start of overlapping talk. Some transcribers also use "]" brackets to show where the overlap stops
	.hh, hh	in-breath (note the preceding fullstop) and out-breath respectively.
	wo(h)rd	(h) is a try at showing that the word has "laughter" bubbling within it
	wor-	A dash shows a sharp cut-off
	wo:rd	Colons show that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound.
	(words)	A guess at what might have been said if unclear
	( )	Unclear talk. Some transcribers like to represent each syllable of unclear talk with a dash
<b>A:</b> <b>B:</b>	word= =word	The equals sign shows that there is no discernible pause between two speakers' turns or, if put between two sounds within a single speaker's turn, shows that they run together
	<u>word</u> , <u>WORD</u>	Underlined sounds are louder, capitals louder still
	°word°	material between "degree signs" is quiet
	>word word< <word word>	Inwards arrows show faster speech, outward slower
→		Analyst's signal of a significant line
	((sniff))	Transcriber's effort at representing something hard, or impossible, to write phonetically

## RESEARCH PROJECT ARTS-BASED EDUCATION

### Information sheet for participants

#### **Would you consider taking take part in some research?**

Claire Kinsella from Edge Hill University is planning to do some research into the impact of art on pupils' learning and would like to invite you to take part in the study.

#### **Who is being invited to participate and what will it involve?**

Young people who are currently attending the Ashwick Centre are being invited to take part in the study. Claire will be taking part in a number of art sessions as a teacher and an observer and she may ask you if you would be willing to answer some questions about the experience, or perhaps complete a small questionnaire, at the end of a session.

#### **What if I don't want to take part?**

You are free to choose not to take part in the study and this will have no effect on whether you can attend the art sessions now or in the future. If you do agree, you can choose how long you wish to take part, from just one session to the entire duration of the study.

#### **What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without having to explain why. If you wish to withdraw some information you have given in questionnaires or interviews, you may do so up to four weeks after this information was collected.

#### **Confidentiality**

When Claire writes up the study everyone's names will be changed (including the name of the school and the teachers) so that no one can be identified. All the paperwork will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and Claire will ask if you are happy with what she has written. In the future the study may be published.

#### **Contact Information**

If you would like more information about the research or would be willing to have a chat with Claire about it before deciding please inform your teacher who will get in touch with Claire or contact her at the following email address: [claire.kinsella@edghehill.ac.uk](mailto:claire.kinsella@edghehill.ac.uk) or by phone at (0)1695 657587

## INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

We would like to invite your child to participate in this research project. You should only allow him/her to participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage your child in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

### **Who is doing the research?**

Claire Kinsella is researching the impact of the visual arts on learning as part of a research project at Edge Hill University. Claire is a qualified community arts educator and has obtained ethical approval from the university's ethics committee to conduct the research. The study is being funded by Edge Hill University and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

### **Research Aims**

The key aim of the proposed research is to create a learning environment that supports the education and interests of a group of pupils attending a Pupil Referral Unit in the UK. The research aims to develop a deeper understanding of the role of art in the process of learning.

### **Who Have We Asked to Participate?**

Pupils currently attending the Ashwick Centre have been invited to take part in this project.

### **When and Where Will the Study Take Place?**

For the most part, the study will take place onsite at the Ashwick Centre. The programme will also involve some field trips to sites in the surrounding area, for example, The Tate Gallery in Liverpool.

### **How Long Will the Study Last?**

The study will last the duration of the 2013-2014 school year. Your child will be involved in approximately 40 art sessions over three school terms with each session lasting between 60 and no more than 120 minutes.

### **What Will Your Child Be Asked to Do?**

Your child will be asked to participate in a series of educational activities and field trips which have been designed in collaboration with the staff at the Ashwick Centre. Your child will also be asked to respond to survey questions on his or her interests, opinions about school and experiences of the current project. Your child will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview about on his her overall experience and opinions of the project.

**What Will You Be Asked to Do?**

You may be invited to attend social gatherings and public displays of the pupil's work. We will ask for your permission to allow your child to participate in any offsite field trips and excursions.

**Are There Any Risks Involved in Participating?**

The risks involved in participating are minimal. We will make sure your child understands that if there are questionnaire or interview questions he or she finds distressing or intrusive, then she or he need not answer them. We will make sure your child understands that she or he can withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

**Are There Any Benefits Involved in Participating?**

Art projects are regarded by many to provide enjoyable learning experiences for young people. The research aims to help your child to develop art skills which he/she may carry forward in the future as a personal hobby or vocation. At the end of the project, we will send you a newsletter describing the major findings and alerting you to any research publications we have generated from the project.

**How Will We Maintain Your Privacy and Confidentiality?**

All information that is collected during the research will be carefully guarded to protect your child's privacy. The names of pupils and staff, the exact location of the school and any other identifying factors will be changed or excluded from any research reports.

The Data Protection Act will be adhered to with all material stored in a locked filing cabinet and/or password protected computer files. Your child's responses to questions will remain completely confidential unless he/she tell us something to indicate that his/her own health and safety are currently in danger. You may withdraw your data or your child's data for up to four weeks after it has been collected.

**What next?**

If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You will also be asked whether you are happy to be contacted about participation in future studies. Your participation in this study will not be affected should you choose not to be re-contacted.

**What If I Have Questions about the Project?**

Please contact **Claire Kinsella** by email at [claire.kinsella@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:claire.kinsella@edgehill.ac.uk) by phone at **(0)1695 657587** or by post at **Department of Psychology, Edge Hill University, St. Helen's Road, Lancashire, L39 4QP**

Alternatively, please contact the project supervisor **Dr. Dave Putwain** by email at: [putwaind@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:putwaind@edgehill.ac.uk) by phone at: **01695 584498** or by post at: **Department of Psychology, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 4QP**

### Basic Needs Questionnaire Items

The basic needs questionnaire in education was developed and subjected to validation analyses with a view to examining the extent to which students participating in the arts programme perceive their basic psychological needs as being met by their school environment.

Initially the operational definitions of the constructs of interest were examined. Most questionnaire items were taken from existing empirical research papers in the field and items were selected with the following considerations in mind: the degree of relevance of each item to the construct intended to measure, the clarity of item wording and the relevance of the item in the British and Northern Irish school contexts. The final 36 items were sourced from the following literature: Williams, Geoffrey and Deci (1996), Standage, Duda and Ntoumanis, (2003), Torsheim, Wold & Samdal (2000) and, Johnston & Finney, (2010). The order of the questionnaire items was randomised and the item response format comprised of a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

#### Items for pupil questionnaire

##### **Autonomy support**

(First 5 questions from Williams & Deci's (1996) "The Learning Climate Questionnaire")

In this \_\_\_\_\_ class:

1. I feel that the teacher provides me with choices and options.
2. I feel understood by the teacher.
3. The teacher shows confidence in my ability to do well
4. The teacher encourages me to ask questions.
5. The teacher listens to how I would like to do things.
6. The teacher is open to pupils' suggestions (Nie & Lau, 2009)

##### **Autonomy**

Questions taken/adapted from: Basic Needs Questionnaire and Standage, Duda and Ntoumanis, 2003

In this \_\_\_\_\_ class:

7. I am free to decide for myself how to do the work
8. I feel pressured to do the work
9. I feel free to express my ideas and opinions
10. I participate in this class because I want to
11. I feel like I can pretty much be myself
12. I have some choice in the activities we do

##### **Competence support**

First four questions are from Standage, Duda and Ntoumanis, 2003

In this \_\_\_\_\_ class...

1. The teacher helps me to improve
2. The teacher makes me feel like I am good at in English/art/maths etc.
3. I feel that the teacher likes me to do well
4. The teacher makes me feel like I am able to do the class work
5. The teacher praises me when I do work well (researcher's idea)
6. The teacher assists me when I have difficulties doing the work (researcher's idea)

### **Competence**

1. I think I am pretty good at English/art/maths etc. (Standage, Duda & Ntoumanis, 2003)
2. I learn things pretty quickly in English/art/maths class (Torsheim, Wold & Samdal, 2000)
3. People I know tell me I am good at English/art/maths etc. (Johnston & Finney, 2010)
4. I can't do English/art/maths very well (Standage, Duda & Ntoumanis, 2003)
5. In my English/art/maths class, I do not get much of a chance to show how capable I am (Johnston & Finney, 2010)
6. I have been able to learn interesting new things in English/art/maths class recently (Johnston & Finney, 2010)

### **Relatedness Support**

Questions 1-4 from Standage, Duda &

Ntoumanis, 2003 In this \_\_\_\_\_ class:

1. the teacher supports me
2. the teacher encourages everybody to work together
3. the teacher has respect for me
4. the teacher is nice and friendly towards pupils
5. the teacher treats me fairly (Torsheim, Wold & Samdal, 2000)
6. the teacher cares about the pupils (Johnston & Finney, 2010)

### **Relatedness**

In this \_\_\_\_\_ class:

1. I really like the other pupils (Basic Needs Questionnaire)
2. I get along with the other pupils (Basic Needs Questionnaire)
3. I consider some of the pupils to be my friends (Basic Needs Questionnaire)
4. The other pupils are pretty friendly towards me (Basic Needs Questionnaire)
5. The other pupils accept me as I am (Torsheim, Wold & Samdal, 2000)
6. The other pupils do not seem to like me much (Basic Needs Questionnaire)



### **Basic Needs Questionnaire validation process**

The basic needs questionnaire in education was developed and subjected to validation analyses with a view to examining the extent to which students participating in the arts programme perceive their basic psychological needs as being met by their school environment. Data was collected over two school visits and using electronic surveys created using Bristol Online Survey software. Questionnaire completion took approximately 12 minutes. Participants' responses were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis in order to assess degree to which covariance among responses to items resembled the SDT constructs they were designed to measure.

### **Testing for Construct Validity**

Although Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) are frequently used to test the factor, convergent, and divergent validity of scores of various psychological instruments, many psychological instruments fail to reach commonly accepted level of fit to the data usually advocated in CFA research. Although the basic assumption behind CFA analysis is that items load on their respective factor with no cross-loading on the other latent factors, it is important to note that many psychological instruments may generate cross-loadings that are still coherent with the underlying theory they purport to test. Indeed, self-determination theory is a dynamic theory which allows for both the presupposed innate integrating tendencies of individuals (so that they are motivated towards achieving balance across all their basic needs when acting within supportive environments), as well as the tendency towards fractionation between these different needs when forced to act within controlling environments. Thus, when examining any questionnaire responses from an SDT perspective, it is argued that as well as maintaining the capacity to develop parsimonious factorial models, it is also useful to incorporate a degree of flexibility regarding the role of crossloadings in the analysis.

Standardised factor loadings for the six factors that were extracted are presented in Table 9.1. Overall, these results show a mix of some relatively discrete factors and other factors which span items for several constructs.

**Table 9.1***Standardised Factor Loadings Based on Responses to 36 Basic Needs Items*

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Factor Loadings</i>					
<i>Items</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Relatedness</i>						
1. I consider some of the pupils to be my friends	<b>0.65</b>	0.16	-0.10	-0.01	0.00	-0.09
2. The other pupils accept me as I am	<b>0.74</b>	0.14	-0.02	0.06	0.04	-0.03
3. The other pupils are friendly towards me	<b>0.77</b>	-0.11	0.13	0.04	-0.01	0.01
4. The other pupils do not seem to like me	<b>0.61</b>	-0.06	0.05	0.18	0.00	-0.08
5. I get along with the other pupils	<b>0.84</b>	-0.02	-0.02	-0.07	-0.05	0.19
6. I really like the other pupils	<b>0.73</b>	-0.01	0.03	-0.05	0.08	0.11
<i>Relatedness Support</i>						
7. The teacher is friendly towards pupils	0.00	<b>0.79</b>	-0.05	0.17	0.03	-0.09
8. The teacher treats me fairly	0.02	<b>0.70</b>	0.01	0.23	0.05	0.03
9. The teacher encourages us to work together	0.03	<b>0.76</b>	-0.07	-0.06	-0.32	0.03
10. The teacher supports me	-0.00	<b>0.70</b>	0.08	0.00	-0.15	-0.17
11. The teacher has respect for me	-0.00	<b>0.68</b>	-0.01	0.04	0.23	0.01
12. The teacher cares about the pupils	0.00	<b>0.65</b>	-0.02	0.12	-0.07	0.09
<i>Autonomy</i>						
13. I can pretty much be myself	0.08	<b>0.55</b>	0.07	-0.03	<b>0.42</b>	0.04
14. I am free to decide for myself how to work	-0.05	<b>0.52</b>	0.08	-0.16	-0.05	0.06

**Table 9.1 Continued**

15. I participate because I want to	0.09	0.27	0.38	-0.12	0.22	0.05
16. I feel pressured to do the work	0.09	0.27	0.26	0.21	-0.06	-0.12
17. I have some choice in the activities we do	-0.01	<b>0.76</b>	0.08	-0.05	-0.08	0.15
18. I feel free to express my opinions and ideas	-0.03	<b>0.74</b>	0.01	-0.03	0.14	0.19
<i>Autonomy Support</i>						
19. T teaches link between subject and real life	0.04	<b>0.53</b>	0.06	0.04	-0.09	0.05
20. T teaches what I am interested in	0.00	0.38	0.21	-0.12	-0.15	-0.10
21. The teacher tells me what to do all the time	0.00	0.28	0.01	<b>0.74</b>	-0.16	-0.01
22. The teacher listens to my opinions and ideas	-0.04	0.19	-0.01	<b>0.78</b>	0.20	-0.03
23. T is only willing to listen to his/her own opinions	-0.02	<b>0.79</b>	0.00	0.10	-0.03	0.06
24. The teacher is not willing to admit own mistakes	0.03	0.23	-0.05	-0.31	-0.00	-0.08
<i>Competence</i>						
25. I am pretty good at X	0.03	0.01	<b>0.77</b>	0.02	0.10	0.15
26. I learn things pretty quickly in X	-0.02	0.09	<b>0.74</b>	-0.00	-0.12	0.05
27. People I know tell me I am good at X	0.02	0.05	<b>0.48</b>	-0.16	0.26	-0.08
28. I can't do X very well	-0.01	-0.06	<b>0.69</b>	0.10	0.02	-0.24
29. I don't get a chance to show my capabilities in X	0.08	0.30	0.09	0.31	-0.00	-0.01
30. I'm able to learn interesting things in X	-0.02	<b>0.44</b>	0.24	0.18	0.03	<b>0.43</b>
<i>Competence Support</i>						
31. T praises me when I work well	-0.00	<b>0.66</b>	-0.01	0.02	0.04	-0.32
32. T makes me feel like I am good at X	-0.01	<b>0.70</b>	0.13	0.02	0.12	-0.11
33. T assists me when I have difficulties in X	0.03	<b>0.68</b>	-0.04	-0.02	-0.13	-0.02
34. T likes me to do well	0.01	<b>0.45</b>	0.01	0.02	0.25	0.00
35. T makes me feel like I'm able to do the work	-0.06	<b>0.70</b>	0.04	-0.10	0.11	-0.08
36. T helps me to improve	0.01	<b>0.64</b>	-0.05	0.09	0.01	0.06

Note 1: Factor loadings >0.04 are emboldened

Note 2: T = Teacher

## Appendix G

### Domain Definitions

#### Relatedness

Relatedness refers to the desire to feel connected to others, the “need to belong” and a tendency to be oriented toward forming strong and stable interpersonal bonds (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It occurs when one feels connected to or understood by others. Relatedness is akin to the need for belongingness posited by Baumeister and Leary (1995), but it is more general, including interpersonal as well as group connections. Thus it involves feeling meaningfully connected to others, rather than feeling alienated or ostracized.

#### Relatedness Support

Relatedness support means providing a person with a feeling of acceptance, respect, and mutuality (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It can also be provided through empathizing with others, adopting a caring approach in interactions and creating a sense of inclusion within a group. Relatedness is undermined through actions which serve to alienate or ostracize others from a group as well as a lack of any attempt to form meaningful connections with others.

#### Autonomy

Autonomy, as defined by Deci and Ryan (1985), occurs when people feel they are the cause of their behaviour, that is, when they feel a sense of whole-hearted volition in their choices. Volition here represents the perception of high psychological freedom during an activity; its opposite is feeling pressured or ego-involved. Therefore, autonomy refers to the organismic desire to self-organize experience and behaviour and to have activity be concordant with one’s integrated sense of self. It is the capacity to have one’s motivation emerge from internally focused source of motivation rather than from an externally focused or a nonvolitional causality (Deci & Ryan, 1985). It also involves perceived choice over one’s actions and reflects an ongoing decision-making flexibility to choose what to do, how to do it, and whether to do it; its opposite is a rigid assignment (Reeve & Jang, 2006). At the same time, autonomy is not independence or total freedom, but rather an internal acceptance of, and engagement with one’s motivated behaviour.

## Operational Definitions

### Relatedness

In the classroom, relatedness is deeply associated with

- a pupil feeling that the teacher genuinely likes, cares for, respects, and values him or her (Ryan & Niemiec, 2009).
- a pupil feeling a sense of inclusion within their class from both peers and teachers.

### Relatedness Support

The need for interpersonal affiliation is met in school when

- pupils have the occasion to develop enriching relationships with other pupils.
- pupils are provided with a sense of acceptance, respect, and a feeling of caring and mutuality. (Filak & Sheldon, 2003).
- pupils form close, stable, and nurturing associations with significant authority figures
- teachers take pleasure in forming relationships and interacting with pupils (Shahar, Henrich, Blatt, Ryan, & Little, 2003).
- Pupils develop friendships, or hear encouraging statements from classmates (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).
- Pupils perceive others to be listening and responding to them.

### Autonomy

When autonomously motivated, pupils

- report an internal locus of causality, feeling free (high volition), and a sense of choice over their actions (Reeve & Jang, 2006).
- willingly devote time and energy to their studies (Ryan, & Niemiec, 2009)

### Instruction Manual for Coders

#### *Procedure*

The SDT observation coding schedule is meant to be used when the class under observation is engaged in classroom activity either as a whole, in groups or individually. A complete observation session will take a minimum of 30 minutes. The observer should position him/herself to one side of the classroom and should not interact with the pupils or the teacher in any way. Completion of the headings at the top of the observation sheet will occupy the observer for the first few minutes of the session and will allow time for the teacher and the class to become accustomed to the observer's presence.

It may be necessary for the observer to move, at some stage, so that the faces of all the children can be seen, but wherever the observer sits it is possible that some interaction will be missed; some actions will not be clearly visible and/or some comments will not be heard.

The recording need not be continuous but it must be unobtrusive. As far as possible, the observer should pay attention only to the immediate phase of the recording using a stop-watch or a watch with a sweep hand. The observer should try to be as objective as possible, remembering that reliability is the chief aim—that a second person observing would record what the first observer recorded. Three minutes is to be spent on each section alternately.

*Section A* is concerned with teacher behaviours which are observed for three minutes on five separate occasions (i.e. 15 minutes of observed teacher behaviour in total). During this time the observer pays attention to the teacher only, in order to record his/her responses to the behaviours of the pupils. When events during these three minutes have been coded, the researcher then moves on to *Section B* which focuses upon the interactions between pupils and their peers as well as their teachers and then, 3 minutes later, the researcher moves on to *Section C* which focuses upon pupil behaviours only.

The coding scheme comprises of three grids which are each divided into separate areas to distinguish between positive and negative behaviours from the perspective of Self-Determination theory. Thus, the grid is divided into two with the left-hand side featuring a plus symbol and red shading to indicate positive behavioural codes and the right-hand side featuring a minus symbol and blue shading to indicate negative behavioural codes. The coding scheme consists of open grid spaces for a molecular-style of coding whereby discrete behavioural units are coded with respect to the frequency of their occurrence. The coding scheme also contains grid spaces which are numbered and sub-divided into six smaller spaces in order to cater for a molar style of coding whereby changes in holistic behavioural units are coded according to the time these changes occur at. Thus, the numbers contained in these grid spaces are to be used for the coding of behaviour occurring at minutes 1, 2 and 3 of sampled time sequence.

For each three minute period, the observer enters symbols in the grid spaces to indicate the occurrence of behaviours which have been pre-specified in order to operationalise each Self-Determination concept. Where the 'O' symbol is chosen to indicate behaviours/events which have not been pre-specified, the observer should add a note in the 'notes' space located on the right of the coding grid. Otherwise, the following sets of symbols are to be used within

the relevant segment boxes:

Relatedness Support

Focus of observation – Teacher/staff behaviours and gestures

### **Class Organisation**

The focus here is upon the manner in which classroom activities are delivered and the ways in which the teacher sets up and manages these tasks. Place a ✓ for every different form of class organisation which occurs during the 3 minute sequence, according to whether this organisational approach promotes or minimises relations amongst pupils and with their teachers. Mark the box which corresponds to the time at which the particular organisational form occurs, i.e. indicate whether a positive or negative event has occurred at minute 1, 2, 3. To give some examples, place a ✓ in the positive grid space for learning tasks which present pupils with opportunities to talk in groups, to collaborate with each other on tasks, to provide feedback/answers/suggestions for the entire group, to share ideas and information. However, place a ✓ in the negative grid space for learning tasks such as those which require pupils to sit at a distance from each other, listen passively to the teacher and work alone on tasks.

### **Proximity**

Teacher behaviours which should be recorded as positive events include those which bring him/her into closer proximity with the pupils thereby maximise opportunities for interaction. However, those which should be recorded as negative events include those which serve to maintain a physical or psychological distance between pupils and teacher. The following symbols should be used for positive teacher behaviours:

**C** = Circulate. Teacher moves beyond the front of the classroom and circulates around the room while talking/teaching/monitoring pupils. This does not include instances where the teacher paces at the front of the classroom only.

**IH**= Individual Help. Teacher stops to talk/help/instruct individual pupils/groups.

**O** = Other. Provide details in notes section.

The following symbols should be used for negative teacher behaviours:

**S** = Seating. Teacher sits a distance apart from pupils.

**F** = Front. Teacher instructs group from front of class.

**O** = Other. Document details in notes section.

### **Gestures**

Teacher behaviours which should be recorded as positive events include those which convey a warm, caring approach to interactions with pupils and help to create a sense of inclusion within the group. However, those which should be recorded as negative events include those which convey a more hostile approach to pupils and interactions which serve to alienate them from the classroom group. The following symbols should be used for positive teacher behaviours:

**S** = Smile  
**L** = Laugh  
**M** = Mirroring students posture when helping him/her with a task  
**N** = Nods encouragingly (not in response to a request for permission)  
**O** = Other. Document details in notes section.

The following symbols should be used for negative teacher behaviours:

**Fr** = Frown  
**G** = Glare  
**T** = Tut  
**O** = Other. Document details in notes section.

### **Relatedness**

#### **Focus of observation – Interactions amongst pupils and/or between teacher/staff and pupils**

##### **Proximity**

The focus here is not upon the way in which the teacher sets up and manages these tasks, but rather in how the pupils respond to this classroom management and organisation. Place a ✓ for every different set of classroom social relations amongst pupils during which behaviours can be regarded as either contributing to or hindering the formation of close interpersonal bonds. Mark the box which corresponds to the time at which the particular social event occurs, i.e. indicate whether a positive or negative event has occurred at minute 1, 2, 3. To give some examples, place a ✓ in the positive grid space for learning tasks whereby pupils take advantage of the opportunity to talk in groups, to collaborate with each other on tasks, to provide feedback/answers/suggestions for the entire group, to share ideas and information. However, place a ✓ in the negative grid space for learning tasks during which pupils sit at a distance from each other, listen passively to the teacher and work alone on tasks.

##### **Co-operation**

The focus here is upon acts which either contribute towards or else hinder the development of a sense of acceptance, respect and reciprocity amongst members of the class. In a co-operative classroom environment, pupils perceive their peers and teachers to be listening and responding to them whereas in an uncooperative classroom environment, pupils are met with a more unhelpful, unsupportive or unaccommodating behaviours which contributes towards a more hostile or alienating classroom environment. The following symbols should be used for positive classroom events:

**W** = pupil works with peers in pairs/groups  
**S** = pupil shares materials/suggestions/ideas with peers/teacher  
**H** = pupil helps another pupil learn/master task/pupil helps a teacher  
**O** = Other. Document behaviour details in notes section.

The following symbols should be used for negative classroom behaviours:

**RW** = Pupil refuses to work with peers/teacher



**RS** = Pupil refuses to share with peers/teacher  
**RH** = Pupil refuses to help another pupil/teacher  
**O** = Other. Document behaviour details in notes section.

### **Gestures**

Pupil and teacher behaviours which should be recorded as positive events include those which convey a warm, caring classroom interactions and help to forge strong interpersonal bonds between members of the class. However, gestures which should be recorded as negative events include those which convey more hostile interpersonal relations either amongst pupils or between teachers and pupils. If the gestures are initiated by a teacher place the following symbol - (T) – next to the relevant code. The following symbols should be used for positive classroom gestures:

**S** = Smiles  
**L** = Laughs  
**O** = Other. Document gesture details in notes section.

Include **(T)** after the above codes if they apply to a teacher.

The following symbols should be used for negative classroom gestures:

**F** = Frown  
**G** = Glare  
**PC** = Physical Conflict  
**O** = Other. Document gesture details in notes section.

Include **(T)** after the above codes if they apply to a teacher.

### **Pupil Autonomy**

#### **Materials Freedom**

The key consideration here is whether the pupils are working with more open-ended materials which are being used to allow them to practice/learn in an unrestricted manner, or alternatively, whether pupils are working on more controlled tasks which require practice of a specific learning point and demand a particular procedure/solution. For example, with more open-ended materials, pupils may work on self-selected or self-generated project which can be completed in any number of ways. With more materials restriction, however, a more controlled form of learning activity takes place, for example, repetitive practice of new language/mathematics problems under conditions where the possibility of making mistakes is minimised. Mark the box which corresponds to the time at which a different usage of classroom materials occurs, i.e. indicate with a ✓ whether the use of materials at minute 1, 2, 3 is more open-ended and free (i.e. positive) or more restrictive and controlled .

### **In/dependent Learning**

Independent learning entails students taking charge of their learning through a capacity for taking initiative, decision-making and independent action on the part of the learner. Independent learners thus play an active role in setting their own learning agendas and selecting learning strategies and seek help in order to enhance their learning. For the purposes of the present observational framework, more dependent learners are focused more upon fulfilling teacher directives to the extent that the completion of the task takes precedence over taking initiative so as to learn. Therefore, the following symbols should be used for positive classroom behaviours:

**LU** – Pupil looks **up** concept/information in book/internet

**AW** – Pupil does **additional work** to that required by teacher during class time

**SH** – seeks **help** from teacher or peer on how to do something

**O** – **Other**. Document behaviour details in notes section.

The following symbols should be used for negative classroom behaviours:

**RP** – requests other peer to complete task

**RT** – requests teacher to complete/do task

**O** – **Other**. Document behaviour details in notes section.

### **Self-expression**

Avoidant/resistant Voluntary

**VR** – Pupil volunteers response to questions/invitations to offer an opinion which are directed to entire class

**VC** – Pupil voluntarily makes verbal contribution to learning activities, pupil voluntarily/spontaneously offers information/verbal contribution in class

**O** – **Other**. Document behaviour details in notes section.

The following symbols should be used for negative classroom behaviours:

**DV** – Pupil declines to express view/answer peer/teacher when individually invited to contribute to learning activities/class

**DC** - Pupils do not contribute view/offer information when openly invited (as a group) to contribute to learning activities/class

**O** – **Other**. Document behaviour details in notes section.

**Observation Rating Sheet**

Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section A : Observee – Teacher**

Notes:

Relatedness Support									
Class Organization						Proximity		Gestures	
+			-			+		-	
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				

**Section B: Observees – Pupils, teacher/staff**

Relatedness									
Proximity						Co-operation		Gestures	
+			-			+		-	
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				

**Section C: Observees – Pupils**

Pupil Autonomy									
Materials Freedom						Independent Learning		Self-expression	
+			-			+		-	
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				
1	2	3	1	2	3				

### Student Interview schedule

#### PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW, HOW IT WILL BE CONDUCTED, ETHICAL PRELIMINARIES

- I can draw or write for you
- We can talk as much/little as you like about a topic
- You don't have to answer a question you don't feel comfortable with

#### 1) About you:

Who are you

What sort of person are you

What would other people say about you?

Implies, importance, behaviour, opposite

#### RELATIONSHIPS (Drawing diagram exercise)

Put 4 people you are close to near your name....

Put 4 people you are not close to further away...

Who are these people? How do you know them?

What kinds of activities do they do on a typical day?

How much time do you spend with them?

#### 2)

If I say the word 'school' to you, what comes to mind?

What do you think about going to school?

Do you feel as though you belong there? Do you feel comfortable/accepted there?

How important is school to you?

I go to school because...

I like being with my friends

I need to study and get qualifications for a job

My teachers are helpful

I like participating in activities

Learning is important to me

I enjoy being there

Other.....

#### 3) PEERS

How did you become friends?

How long have you been friends?

Do you talk about school problems?

Has your friendship group changed over time?

What does he/she feel/think/say about school?  
 Does he/she help you with school work?  
 Does he/she participate in any sports teams/clubs/scouts/volunteering?  
 Do you talk about your plans for the future?  
 Do you talk about problems you are having in school?  
 Do you think doing well at school is important to him/her?  
 Is it important to him/her to do well at school?  
 Do you do any activities/hobbies together? What? How often?

Does he/she skip school/classes?  
 Have trouble getting homework done?  
 Disrupt the class?  
 Become involved in physical fights?  
 Sent to the principal's office?

Does he or she break the school rules? How often? What do you think/do when this happens?

#### TEACHER RELATIONS

Scale drawing...  
 Teachers you get on with  
 Teachers you don't/didn't get on with

+ \_\_\_\_\_ -  
 .....

*Draw diagram*

Why?

#### FUTURE PLANS

Do you have any future plans?  
 Do you have any future goals/aims?  
 What do you expect might happen for you in the next few years of school?

I go to school because

I like being with my friends  
 I need to study and get qualifications for a job  
 My teachers are helpful  
 I like participating in activities  
 Learning is important to me  
 I enjoy being there  
 Other.....